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THE NIGHT LAND

A LOVE TALE

BY

WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON

AUTHOR OF "THE BOATS OF THE 'GLEN CARRIG,'"
"THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND," "THE GHOST PIRATES,"
"MEN OF THE DEEP WATERS," "CARNACKI THE GHOST FINDER,"
"CAPTAIN GAULT," &c., &c.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This edition has been revised and abridged on account of present day costs of production.

The original edition can still be obtained through any bookseller.

PREFACE

"THIS to be Love, that your spirit to live in a natural holiness with the Beloved, and your bodies to be a sweet and natural delight that shall be never lost of a lovely mystery. . . . And shame to be unborn, and all things to go wholesome, and proper out of an utter greatness of understanding; and the Man to be an Hero and a Child before the Woman; and the Woman to be an Holy Light of the Spirit and an Utter Companion and in the same time a glad Possession unto the Man. . . . And this doth be Human Love. . . ."

". . . for this to be the especial glory of Love, that it doth make unto all Sweetness and Greatness, and doth be a fire burning all Littleness; so that did all in this world to have met The Beloved, then did Wantonness be dead, and there to grow Gladness and Charity, dancing in the years."

THE NIGHT LAND

CHAPTER I

MIRDATH THE BEAUTIFUL

" And I cannot touch her face
And I cannot touch her hair
And I kneel to empty shadows
Just memories of her grace ;
And her voice sings in the winds
And in the sobs of dawn
And among the flowers at night
And from the brooks at sunrise
And from the sea at sunset,
And I answer with vain callings . . .
. . . . . "

It was the Joy of the Sunset that brought us to speech. I was gone a long way from my house, walking lonely-wise, and stopping often that I view the piling upward of the Battlements of Evening, and to feel the dear and strange gathering of the Dusk come over all the world about me.

The last time that I paused, I was truly lost in a solemn joy of the Glory of the Coming Night ; and maybe I laughed a little in my throat, standing there alone in the midst of the Dusk upon the World. And, lo ! my content was answered out of the trees that bounded the country road upon my right ; and it was so as that some one had said : " And thou also ! " in glad understanding, that I laughed again a little in my throat ; as though I had only a half-believing that any true human did answer my laugh ; but rather some sweet Delusion or Spirit that was tuned to my mood.

But she spoke and called me by my name ; and when

I had gone to the side of the road, that I should see her somewhat, and discover whether I knew her, I saw that she was surely that lady, who for her beauty was known through all of that sweet County of Kent as Lady Mirdath the Beautiful; and a near neighbour to me; for the Estates of her Guardian abounded upon mine.

Yet, until that time, I had never met her; for I had been so oft and long abroad; and so much given to my Studies and my Exercises when at home, that I had no further Knowledge of her than Rumour gave to me odd time; and for the rest, I was well content; for as I have given hint, my books held me, and likewise my Exercises; for I was always an athlete, and never met the man so quick or so strong as I did be; save in some fiction of a tale or in the mouth of a boaster.

Now, I stood instantly with my hat in my hand; and answered her gentle bantering so well as I might, the while that I peered intent and wondering at her through the gloom; for truly Rumour had told no tale to equal the beauty of this strange maid; who now stood jesting with so sweet a spirit, and claiming kinship of Counsinhood with me, as was truth, now that I did wake to think.

And, truly, she made no ado; but named me frank by my lad's name, and gave laughter and right to me to name her Mirdath, and nothing less or more—at that time. And she bid me then to come up through the hedge, and make use of a gap that was her own especial secret, as she confessed, when she took odd leave with her maid to some country frolic, drest as village maids; but not to deceive many, as I dare believe.

And I came up through the gap in the hedge and stood beside her; and tall she had seemed to me, when I looked up at her; and tall she was, in truth; but indeed I was a great head taller. And she invited me then to walk with her to the house, that I meet her Guardian and give word to my sorrow that I had so long neglected to make call upon them; and truly her eyes to shine with mischief and delight, as she named me so for my amissness.

But, indeed, she grew sober in a moment, and she set up her finger to me to hush, as that she heard somewhat in the wood that lay all the way upon our right. And, indeed, something I heard too; for there was surely a

rustling of the leaves, and anon a dead twig crackt with a sound clear and sharp in the stillness.

And immediately there came three men running out of the wood at me; and I called to them sharply to keep off or beware of harm; and I put the maid to my back with my left hand, and had my oak staff ready for my use.

But the three men gave out no word of reply; but ran in at me; and I saw somewhat of the gleam of knives; and at that, I moved very glad and brisk to the attack; and behind me there went shrill and sweet, the call of a silver whistle; for the Maid was whistling for her dogs; and maybe the call was also a signal to the men-servants of her house.

Yet, truly, there was no use in help that was yet to come; for the need did be then and instant; and I nowise loath to use my strength before my sweet cousin. And I stepped forward, briskly, as I have told; and the end of my staff I drove into the body of the left-ward man, so that he dropped like a dead man. And I hit very sharp at the head of another, and surely crackt it for him; for he made instantly upon the earth; but the third man I met with my fist, and neither had he any great need of a second blow; but went instant to join his companions, and the fight thus to have ended before it was ever proper begun, and I laughing a little with a proper pride, to know the bewilderment that I perceived in the way that the Lady Mirdath, my cousin, stood and regarded me through the dusk of the hushed even.

But, indeed, there was no time left to us, before there came bounding up, three great boar-hounds, that had been loosed to her whistle; and she had some ado to keep the brutes off me; and I then to beat them off the men upon the earth, lest they maul them as they lay. And directly, there was a noise of men shouting, and the light of lanthorns in the night, and the footmen of the house to come running with lanthorns and cudgels; and knew not whether to deal with me, or not, in the first moment, even as the dogs; but when they saw the men upon the ground, and learned my name and saw me proper, they kept well their distance and had no lack of respect; but, indeed, my sweet cousin to have the most of any; only that she showed no intent to keep distance of me;

but to have a new and deeper feeling of kinship than she at first had shown.

And the men-servants asked what should be done with the foot-pads; seeing that they were now recovering. But, indeed, I left the matter, along with some silver, to the servants; and very sound justice they dealt out to the men; for I heard their cries a good while after we had gone away.

Now, when we were come up to the Hall, my cousin must take me in to her Guardian, Sir Alfred Jarles, an old man and venerable that I knew a little in passing and because our estates abounded. And she praised me to my face, yet quaintly-wise; and the old man, her Guardian, thanked me most honourably and with a nice courtesy; so that I was a welcome house-friend from that time onward.

And I stayed all that evening, and dined, and afterward went out again into the home-grounds with the Lady Mirdath; and she more friendly to me than ever any woman had been; and seemed to me as that she had known me always. And, truly, I had the same feeling in my heart toward her; for it was, somehow, as though we knew each the way and turn of the other, and had a constant delight to find this thing and that thing to be in common; but no surprise; save that so pleasant a truth had so natural a discovery.

And one thing there was that I perceived held the Lady Mirdath all that dear fore-night; and this was, indeed, the way that I had my pleasure so easy with the three foot-pads. And she asked me plainly whether I was not truly very strong; and when I laughed with young and natural pride, she caught my arm suddenly to discover for herself how strong I might be. And, surely, she loosed it even the more sudden, and with a little gasping of astonishment, because it was so great and hard. And afterward, she walked by me very silent, and seeming thoughtful; but she went never any great way off from me.

And, truly, if the Lady Mirdath had a strange pleasure in my strength, I had likewise a constant wonder and marvel in her beauty, that had shown but the more lovely in the candle-light at dinner,

But there were further delights to me in the days that came; for I had happiness in the way that she had pleasure of the Mystery of the Evening, and the Glamour of Night, and the Joy of Dawn, and all suchlike.

And one evening, that I ever remember, as we wandered in the park-lands, she began to say half unthinking that it was truly an elves-night. And she stopped herself immediately; as though she thought I should have no understanding; but, indeed, I was upon mine own familiar ground of inward delight; and I replied in a quiet and usual voice, that the Towers of Sleep would grow that night, and I felt in my bones that it was a night to find the Giant's Tomb, or the Tree with the Great Painted Head, or— And surely I stopped very sudden; for she gripped me in that moment, and her hand shook as she held me; but when I would ask her what ailed, she bid me, very breathless, to say on, to say on. And, with a half understanding, I told her that I had but meant to speak of The Moon Garden, that was an olden and happy fancy of mine.

And, in verity, when I said that, the Lady Mirdath cried out something in a strange low voice, and brought me to a halt, that she might face me. And she questioned me very earnest; and I answered just so earnest as she; for I was grown suddenly to an excitement, in that I perceived she knew also. And, in verity, she told me that she had knowledge; but had thought that she was alone in the world with her knowledge of that strange land in her dreams; and now to find that I also had travelled in those dear, strange dream lands. And truly the marvel of it—the marvel of it! As she to say time and oft. And again, as we walked, she gave out word that there was little wonder she had been urged to call to me that night, as she saw me pause upon the road; though, indeed, she had learned of our cousin-ship before, having seen me go by on my horse pretty oft, and inquired concerning me; and mayhap daintily irked that I had so little heed of Lady Mirdath the Beautiful. But, indeed, I had thought of other matters; yet had been human enough, had I but met her proper before to see her.

Now you must not think that I was not utter stirred by the wonder of this thing, that we had both a dreamful

knowledge of the same matters, of which each had thought none other knew. Yet, when I questioned more, there was much that had been in my fancies that was foreign to her, and likewise much that had been familiar to her, that was of no meaning to me. But though there was this, that brought a little regret to us, there would be, time and again, some new thing that one told, that the other knew and could finish the telling of, to the gladness and amazement of both.

And so shall you picture us wandering and having constant speech, so that, hour by hour, we grew gladly aged in dear knowledge and sweet friendship of the other.

And truly, how the time passed, I know not; but there came presently a hullabaloo, and the shouts of men's voices and the baying of dogs, and the gleam of lanthorns, so that I knew not what to think; until, very sudden. and with a sweet and strange little laughter, the Lady Mirdath to perceive that we had missed the hours utter in our converse; so that her Guardian (made uneasy because of the three foot-pads) had ordered a search, And we all that time a-wander together in happy forgetfulness.

And we turned homeward, then, and came towards the lights; but indeed, the dogs found us before we were come there; and they had grown to know me now, and leaped about me, barking very friendly; and so in a minute the men had discovered us, and were gone back to tell Sir Jarles that all was well.

And this was the way of our meeting and the growing of our acquaintance, and the beginning of my great love for Mirdath the Beautiful.

Now, from that time onward, evening by evening would I go a-wander along the quiet and country road that led from my estate to the estate of Sir Jarles. And always I went inward by the hedge-gap; and oft I should find the Lady Mirdath walking in that part of the woods but alway with her great boar-hounds about her; for I had begged that she do this thing for her sweet safety; and she to seem wishful to pleasure me; but truly to be just so oft utter perverse in diverse matters; and to strive to plague me, as though she would discover how much I would endure and how far she might go to anger me.

And, truly, well I remember how that one night, coming to the hedge-gap, I saw two country-maids come thence out from the woods of Sir Jarles' ; but they were naught to me, and I would have gone upward through the gap, as ever ; only that, as they passed me, they curtseyed somewhat over-graceful for rough wenches. And I had a sudden thought, and came up to them to see them more anigh ; and truly I thought the taller was surely the Lady Mirdath. But, indeed, I could not be sure ; for when I asked who she did be, she only to simper and to curtsey again ; and so was I very natural all in doubt ; but yet sufficient in wonder (having some knowledge of the Lady Mirdath) to follow the wenches, the which I did.

And they then, very speedy and sedate, as though I were some rack-rape that they did well to be feared of alone at night ; and so came at last to the village green, where a great dance was a-foot, with torches, and a wandering fiddler to set the tune ; and ale in plenty.

And the two to join the dance, and danced very hearty ; but had only each the other for a partner, and had a good care to avoid the torches. And by this, I was pretty sure that they were truly the Lady Mirdath and her maid ; and so I took chance when they had danced somewhat my way, to step over to them, and ask boldly for a dance. But, indeed, the tall one answered, simpering, that she was promised ; and immediately gave her hand to a great hulking farmer-lout, and went round the green with him ; and well punished she was for her waywardness ; for she had all her skill to save her pretty feet from his loutish stampings ; and very glad she was to meet the end of the dance.

And I knew now for certainty that it was Mirdath the Beautiful, despite her plan of disguise, and the darkness and the wench's dress and the foot-gear that marred her step so great. And I walked across to her, and named her, whispering, by name ; and gave her plain word to be done of this unwisdom, and I would take her home. But she to turn from me, and she stamped her foot, and went again to the lout ; and when she had suffered another dance with him, she bid him be her escort a part of the way ; the which he was nothing loath of.

And another lad, that was mate to him, went likewise ;

and in a moment, so soon as they were gone away from the light of the torches, the rough hind-lads made to set their arms about the waists of the two wenches, not wotting who they had for companions. And the Lady Mirdath was no longer able to endure, and cried out in her sudden fear and disgust, and struck the rough hind that embraced her, so hard that he loosed her a moment swearing great oaths. And directly he came back to her again, and had her in a moment, to kiss her; and she, loathing him to the very death, beat him madly in the face with her hands; but to no end, only that I was close upon them. And, in that moment, she screamed my name aloud; and I caught the poor lout and hit him once, but not to harm him overmuch; yet to give him a long memory of me; and afterward I threw him into the side of the road. But the second hind, having heard my name, loosed from the tiring-maid, and ran for his life; and, indeed, my strength was known all about that part.

And I caught Mirdath the Beautiful by her shoulders, and shook her very soundly, in my anger. And afterward, I sent the maid onward; and she, having no word from her Mistress to stay, went forward a little; and in this fashion we came at last to the hedge-gap, with the Lady Mirdath very hushed; but yet walking anigh to me, as that she had some secret pleasure of my nearness. And I led her through the gap, and so homeward to the Hall; and there bid her good-night at a side door that she held the key of. And, truly, she bid me good-night in an utter quiet voice; and was almost as that she had no haste to be gone from me that night.

Yet, when I met her on the morrow, she was full of a constant impudence to me; so that, having her alone to myself, when the dusk was come, I asked her why she would never be done of her waywardness; because that I ached to have companionship of her; and, instead, she denied my need. And, at that, she was at once very gentle; and full of a sweet and winsome understanding; and surely knew that I wished to be rested for she brought out her harp, and played me dear olden melodies of our childhood-days all that evening; and so had my love for her the more intent and glad. And she saw me that

night to the hedge-gap, having her three great boar-hounds with her, to company her home again. But, indeed, I followed her afterwards, very silent, until I saw her safe into the Hall; for I would not have her alone in the night; though she believed that I was then far away on the country road. And as she walked with her dogs, one or another would run back to me, to nose against me friendly-wise; but I sent them off again very quiet; and she had no knowledge of aught; for she to go singing a love-song quietly all the way home. But whether she loved me, I could not tell; though she had a nice affection for me.

Now, on the following evening, I went somewhat early to the gap; and lo! who should be standing in the gap, talking to the Lady Mirdath, but a very clever-drest man, that had a look of the Court about him; and he, when I approached, made no way for me through the gap; but stood firm, and eyed me very insolent; so that I put out my hand, and lifted him from my way.

And lo! the Lady Mirdath turned a bitterness of speech upon me that gave me an utter pain and astonishment; so that I was assured in a moment that she had no true love for me, or she had never striven so to put me to shame before the stranger, and named me uncouth and brutal to a smaller man. And, indeed, you shall perceive how I was in my heart in that moment.

And I saw that there was some seeming of justice in what the Lady Mirdath said; but yet might the man have shown a better spirit; and moreover Mirdath the Beautiful had no true call to shame me, her true friend and cousin, before this stranger. Yet did I not stop to argue; but bowed very low to the Lady Mirdath; and afterward I bowed a little to the man and made apology; for, indeed, he was neither great not strong-made; and I had been better man to have shown courtesy to him; at least in the first.

And so, having done justice to my own respect, I turned and went on, and left them to their happiness.

Now, I walked then, maybe twenty good miles, before I came to my own home; for there was no rest in me all that night, or ever, because that I was grown deadly in love of Mirdath the Beautiful; and all my spirit and

heart and body of me pained with the dreadful loss that I was come so sudden upon.

And for a great week I had my walks in another direction; but in the end of that week, I must take my walk along the olden way, that I might chance to have but a sight of My Lady. And, truly, I had all sight that ever man did need to put him in dread pain and jealousy; for, truly, as I came in view of the gap, there was the Lady Mirdath walking just without the borders of the great wood; and beside her there walked the clever-drest man of the Court, and she suffered his arm around her, so that I knew they were lovers; for the Lady Mirdath had no brothers nor any youthful men kin.

Yet, when Mirdath saw me upon the road, she shamed in a moment to be so caught; for she put her lover's arm from about her, and bowed to me, a little changed of colour in the face; and I bowed very low—being but a young man myself—; and so passed on, with my heart very dead in me. And as I went, I saw that her lover came again to her, and had his arm once more about her; and so, maybe, they looked after me, as I went very stiff and desperate; but, indeed, I looked not back on them, as you may think.

And for a great month then, I went not near to the gap; for my love raged in me, and I was hurt in my pride; and, truly, neither had a true justice been dealt to me by the Lady Mirdath.

Yet in that month, my love was a leaven in me, and made slowly a sweetness and a tenderness and an understanding that were not in me before; and truly Love and Pain do shape the Character of Man.

And in the end of that time, I saw a little way into Life, with an understanding heart, and began presently to take my walks again past the gap; but truly Mirdath the Beautiful was never to my sight; though one evening I thought she might be not a great way off; for one of her great boar-hounds came out of the wood, and down into the road to nose against me, very friendly, as a dog oft doth with me.

Yet, though I waited a good time after the dog had left me, I had no sight of Mirdath, and so passed on again, with my heart heavy in me; but without bitterness,

because of the understanding that was begun to grow in my heart.

Now, there passed two weary and lonely weeks, in which I grew sick to have knowledge of the beautiful maid. And, truly, in the end of that time, I made a sudden resolving that I would go in through the gap, and come to the home-grounds about the Hall, and so maybe have some sight of her.

And this resolving I had one evening; and I went out immediately, and came to the gap, and went in through the gap, and so by a long walking to the gardens about the Hall. And, truly, when I was come there, I saw a good light of lanthorns and torches, and a great company of people dancing; and all drest in quaint dress; so that I knew they had a festival for some cause. And there came suddenly a horrid dread into my heart that this might be the marriage-dance of the Lady Mirdath; but, indeed, this was foolishness; for I had surely heard of the marriage, if there had been any. And, truly, in a moment, I remembered that she was come one-and-twenty years of age on that day, and to the end of her ward-ship; and this surely to be festival in honour of the same.

And a very bright and pretty matter it was to watch, save that I was so heavy in the heart with loneliness and longing; for the company was great and gay and the lights plentiful and set all about from the trees; and in leaf-made arbours about the great lawn. And a great table spread with eating matters and silver and crystal, and great lamps of bronze and silver went all a-down one end of the lawn; and the dance constant upon the other part.

And surely, the Lady Mirdath to step out of the dance, very lovely drest; yet seeming, to mine eyes, a little pale in the looming of the lights. And she to wander to a seat to rest; and, indeed, in a moment, there to be a dozen youths of the great families of the country-side, in attendance about her, making talk and laughter, and each eager for her favour; and she very lovely in the midst of them, but yet, as I did think, lacking of somewhat, and a little pale-seeming, as I have told; and her glance to go odd-wise beyond the groupt men about her; so that I understood in a moment that her lover was not

there, and she to be a-lack in the heart for him. Yet, why he was not there, I could not suppose, save that he might have been called back to the Court.

And, surely, as I watched the other young men about her, I burned with a fierce and miserable jealousy of them; so that I could near have stept forth and plucked her out from among them, and had her to walk with me in the woods, as in the olden days, when she also had seemed near to love. But, truly, what use to this? For it was not they who held her heart, as I saw plain; for I watched her, with an eager and lonesome heart, and knew that it was one small man of the Court that was lover to her, as I have told.

And I went away again then, and came not near to the gap for three great months, because that I could not bear the pain of my loss; but in the end of that time, my very pain to urge me to go, and to be worse than the pain of not going; so that I found myself one evening in the gap, peering, very eager and shaken, across the sward that lay between the gap and the woods; for this same place to be as an holy ground to me; for there was it that first I saw Mirdath the Beautiful, and surely lost my heart to her in that one night.

And a great time I stayed there in the gap, waiting and watching hopelessly. And lo! sudden there came something against me, touching my thigh very soft; and, when I looked down, it was one of the boar-hounds, so that my heart leaped, near frightened; for truly My Lady was come somewhere nigh, as I did think.

And, as I waited, very hushed and watchful; yet with an utter beating heart; surely I heard a faint and low singing among the trees, so utter sad. And lo! it was Mirdath singing a broken love song, and a-wander there in the dark alone, save for her great dogs.

And I harked, with strange pain in me, that she did be so in pain; and I ached to bring her ease; yet moved not, but was very still there in the gap; save that my being was all in turmoil.

And presently, as I harked, there came a slim white figure out from among the trees; and the figure cried out something, and came to a quick pause, as I could see in the half-dark. And lo! in that moment, there came

a sudden and unreasoned hope into me ; and I came up out of the gap, and was come to Mirdath in a moment, calling very low and passionate and eager : " Mirdath ! Mirdath ! Mirdath ! "

And this way I came to her ; and her great dog that was with me, to bound beside me, in thought, mayhap, that it was some game. And when I came to the Lady Mirdath, I held out my hands to her, not knowing what I did ; but only the telling of my heart that needed her so utter, and craved to ease her of her pain. And lo ! she put out her arms to me, and came into mine arms with a little run. And there she bode, weeping strangely ; but yet with rest upon her ; even as rest was come sudden and wondrous upon me.

And sudden, she moved in mine arms, and slipt her hands to me, very dear, and held her lips up to me, like some sweet child, that I kiss her ; but, indeed, she was also a true woman, and in honest and dear love of me.

And this to be the way of our betrothal ; and simple and wordless it was ; yet sufficient, only that there is no sufficiency in Love.

Now, presently, she loosed herself out of mine arms, and we walked homeward through the woods, very quiet, and holding hands, as children do. And I then in a while to ask her about the man of the Court ; and she laughed very sweet into the silence of the wood ; but gave me no answer, save that I wait until we were come to the Hall.

And when we were come there, she took me into the great hall, and made a very dainty and impudent bow, mocking me. And so made me known to another lady, who sat there, upon her task of embroidering, which she did very demure, and as that she had also a dainty Mischief lurking in her.

And truly, the Lady Mirdath never to be done of naughty laughter, that made her dearly breathless with delight, and to sway a little, and set the trembling of pretty sounds in her throat ; and surely she must pull down two great pistols from an arm-rack, that I fight a duel to the death with the lady of the embroidering, who held her face down over her work, and shook likewise with the wickedness of her laughter that she could not hide.

And in the end, the Lady of the Embroidering looked

up sudden into my face; and I then to see somewhat of the mischief in a moment; for she had the face of the man of the Court suit, that had been lover to Mirdath.

And the Lady Mirdath then to explain to me how that Mistress Alison (which was her name) was a dear and bosom friend, and she it was that had been drest in the Court suit to play a prank for a wager with a certain young man who would be lover to her, an he might. And I then to come along and so speedy to offence that truly I never saw her face plain, because that I was so utter jealous. And so the Lady Mirdath had been more justly in anger than I supposed, because that I had put hands upon her friend, as I have told.

And this to be all of it, save that they had planned to punish me, and had met every evening at the gap, to play at lovers, perchance I should pass, so that I should have greater cause for my jealousy, and truly they to have a good revenge upon me; for I had suffered very great a long while because of it.

Yet, as you do mind, when I came upon them, the Lady Mirdath had a half-regret, that was very natural, because even then she was in love of me, as I of her; and because of this, she drew away, as you shall remember, being—as she confessed—suddenly and strangely troubled and to want me; but afterwards as much set again to my punishment, because that I bowed so cold and went away. And indeed well I might.

Yet, truly, all was safe ended now, and I utter thankful and with a mad delight in the heart; so that I caught up Mirdath, and we danced very slow and stately around the great hall, the while that Mistress Alison whistled us a tune with her mouth, which she could very clever, as many another thing, I wot.

And each day and all day after this Gladness, Mirdath and I could never be apart; but must go a-wander always together, here and there, in an unending joy of our togetherness.

And in a thousand things were we at one in delight; for we had both of us that nature which doth love the blue of eternity which gathers beyond the wings of the sunset; and the invisible sound of the starlight falling upon the world; and the quiet of grey evenings when

the Towers of Sleep are builded unto the mystery of the Dusk; and the solemn green of strange pastures in the moonlight; and the speech of the sycamore unto the beech; and the slow way of the sea when it doth mood; and the soft rustling of the night clouds. And likewise had we eyes to see the Dancer of the Sunset, casting her mighty robes so strange; and ears to know that there shakes a silent thunder over the Face of Dawn; and much else that we knew and saw and understood together in our utter joy.

Now, there happened to us about this time a certain adventure that came near to cause the death of Mirdath the Beautiful; for one day as we wandered, as ever, like two children in our contentment, I made remark to Mirdath that there went only two of the great boar-hounds with us; and she then told me that the third was to the kennels, being sick.

Yet, scarce had she told me so much; ere she cried out something and pointed; and lo! I saw that the third hound came toward us, at a run, yet very strange-seeming in his going. And in a moment, Mirdath cried out that the hound was mad; and truly, I saw then that the brute slavered as he came running.

And in a moment he was upon us, and made never a sound; but leaped at me in one instant of time; all before I had any thought of such intent. But surely, My Beautiful One had a dreadful love for me, for she cast herself at the dog, to save me, calling to the other hounds. And she was bitten in a moment by the brute, as she strove to hold him off from me. But I to have him instant by the neck and the body, and brake him, so that he died at once; and I cast him to the earth, and gave help to Mirdath, that I draw the poison from the wounds.

And this I did so well as I might, despite that she would have me stop. And afterwards, I took her into mine arms, and ran very fierce all the long and weary way to the Hall, and with hot skewers I burned the wounds; so that when the doctor came, he to say I have saved her by my care, if indeed she to be saved. But, truly, she had saved me in any wise, as you shall think; so that I could never be done of honour to her.

And she very pale; but yet to laugh at my fears, and

to say that she soon to have her health, and the wounds healed very speedy; but, indeed, it was a long and bitter time before they were proper healed, and she so well as ever. Yet, in time, so it was; and an utter weight off my heart.

And when Mirdath was grown full strong again, we set our wedding day. And well do I mind how she stood there in her bridal dress, on that day, so slender and lovely as may Love have stood in the Dawn of Life; and the beauty of her eyes that had such sober sweetness in them, despite the dear mischief of her nature; and the way of her little feet, and the loveliness of her hair; and the dainty rogue-grace of her movements; and her mouth an enticement, as that a child and a woman smiled out of the one face. And this to be no more than but an hint of the loveliness of My Beautiful One.

And so we were married.

Mirdath, My Beautiful One, lay dying, and I had no power to hold Death backward from such dread intent. In another room, I heard the little wail of the child, and the wail of the child waked my wife back into this life, so that her hands fluttered white and desperately needful upon the coverlid.

I kneeled beside My Beautiful One, and reached out and took her hands very gentle into mine; but still they fluttered so needful; and she looked at me, dumbly; but her eyes beseeching.

Then I went out of the room, and called gently to the Nurse; and the Nurse brought in the child, wrapped very softly in a long, white robe. And I saw the eyes of My Beautiful One grow clearer with a strange, lovely light; and I beckoned to the Nurse to bring the babe near.

My wife moved her hands very weakly upon the coverlid, and I knew that she craved to touch her child; and I signed to the Nurse, and took my child in mine arms; and the Nurse went out from the room, and so we three were alone together.

Then I sat very gentle upon the bed; and I held the babe near to My Beautiful One, so that the wee cheek

of the babe touched the white cheek of my dying wife; but the weight of the child I kept off from her.

And presently, I knew that Mirdath, My Wife, strove dumbly to reach for the hands of the babe; and I turned the child more toward her, and slipped the hands of the child into the weak hands of My Beautiful One. And I held the babe above my wife, with an utter care; so that the eyes of my dying One, looked into the young eyes of the child. And presently, in but a few moments of time, though it had been someways an eternity, My Beautiful One closed her eyes and lay very quiet. And I took away the child to the Nurse, who stood beyond the door. And I closed the door, and came back to Mine Own, that we have those last instants alone together.

And the hands of my wife lay very still and white; but presently they began to move softly and weakly, searching for somewhat; and I put out my great hands to her, and took her hands with an utter care; and so a little time passed.

Then her eyes opened, quiet and grey, and a little dazed seeming; and she rolled her head on the pillow and saw me; and the pain of forgetfulness went out of her eyes, and she looked at me with a look that grew in strength, unto a sweetness of tenderness and full understanding.

And I bent a little to her; and her eyes told me to take her into mine arms for those last minutes. Then I went very gentle upon the bed, and lifted her with an utter and tender care, so that she lay suddenly strangely restful against my breast; for Love gave me skill to hold her, and Love gave My Beautiful One a sweetness of ease in that little time that was left to us.

And so we twain were together; and Love seemed that it had made a truce with Death in the air about us, that we be undisturbed; for there came a drowse of rest even upon my tense heart, that had known nothing but a dreadful pain through the weary hours.

And I whispered my love silently to My Beautiful One, and her eyes answered; and the strangely beautiful and terrible moments passed by into the hush of eternity.

And suddenly, Mirdath My Beautiful One, spoke,—whispering something. And I stooped gently to hark;

and Mine Own spoke again; and lo! it was to call me by the olden Love Name that had been mine through all the utter lovely months of our togetherness.

And I began again to tell her of my love, that should pass beyond death; and lo! in that one moment of time, the light went out of her eyes, and My Beautiful One lay dead in mine arms . . . My Beautiful One. . . .

CHAPTER II

THE LAST REDOUBT

SINCE Mirdath, My Beautiful One, died and left me lonely in this world, I have suffered an anguish, and an utter and dreadful pain of longing, such as truly no words shall ever tell; for, in truth, I that had all the world through her sweet love and companionship, and knew all the joy and gladness of Life, have known such lonesome misery as doth stun me to think upon.

Yet am I to my pen again; for of late a wondrous hope has grown in me, in that I have, at night in my sleep, waked into the future of this world, and seen strange things and utter marvels, and known once more the gladness of life; for I have learned the promise of the future, and have visited in my dreams those places where in the womb of Time, she and I shall come together, and part, and again come together—breaking asunder most drearly in pain, and again reuniting after strange ages, in a glad and mighty wonder.

And this is the utter strange story of that which I have seen, and which, truly, I must set out, if the task be not too great; so that, in the setting out thereof, I may gain a little ease of the heart; and likewise, mayhap, give ease of hope to some other poor human, that doth suffer, even as I have suffered so dreadful with longing for Mine Own that is dead.

And some shall read and say that this thing was not, and some shall dispute with them; but to them all I say naught, save "Read!" And having read that which I set down, then shall one and all have looked towards

Eternity with me—unto its very portals. And so to my telling :—

To me, in this last time of my visions, of which I would tell, it was not as if I *dreamed* ; but, as it were, that I *waked* there into the dark, *in the future of this world*. And the sun had died ; and for me thus newly waked into that Future, to look back upon this, our Present Age, was to look back into dreams that my soul knew to be of reality ; but which to those newly-seeing eyes of mine, appeared but as a far vision, strangely hallowed with peacefulness and light.

Always, it seemed to me when I awakened into the Future, into the Everlasting Night that lapped this world, that I saw near to me, and girdling me all about, a blurred greyness. And presently this, the greyness, would clear and fade from about me, even as a dusky cloud, and I would look out upon a world of darkness, lit here and there with strange sights. And with my waking into that Future, I waked not to ignorance ; but to a full knowledge of those things which lit the Night Land ; even as a man wakes from sleep each morning, and knows immediately he wakes, the names and knowledge of the Time which has bred him, and in which he lives. And the same while, a knowledge I had, as it were sub-conscious, of this Present—this early life, which now I live so utterly alone.

In my earliest knowledge of *that* place, I was a youth, seventeen years grown, and my memory tells me that when first I waked, or came, as it might be said, to myself in that Future, I stood in one of the embrasures of the Last Redoubt—that great Pyramid of grey metal which held the last millions of this world from the Powers of the Slayers.

And so full am I of the knowledge of that Place, that scarce can I believe that none here know ; and because I have such difficulty, it may be that I speak over familiarly of those things of which I know ; and heed not to explain much that it is needful that I should explain to those who must read here, in this our present day. For there, as I stood and looked out, I was less the man of years of *this* age, than the *youth* of that, with the natural knowledge of *that* life which I had gathered by living all my

seventeen years of life there; though, until that my first vision, I (of this Age) knew not of that other and Future Existence; yet woke to it so naturally as may a man wake here in his bed to the shining of the morning sun, and know it by name, and the meaning of aught else. And yet, as I stood there in the vast embrasure, I had also a knowledge, or memory, of this present life of ours, deep down within me; but touched with a halo of dreams, and yet with a conscious longing for One, known even there in a half memory as Mirdath.

As I have said, in my earliest memory, I mind that *I* stood in an embrasure, high up in the side of the Pyramid, and looked outwards through a queer spy-glass to the North-West. Aye, full of youth and with an adventurous and yet half-fearful heart.

And in my brain was, as I have told, the knowledge that had come to me in all the years of my life in the Redoubt; and yet until that moment, this *Man of this Present Time* had no knowledge of that future existence; and now I stood and had suddenly the knowledge of a life already spent in that strange land, and deeper within me the misty knowings of this our present Age, and, maybe, also of some others.

To the North-West I looked through the queer spy-glass, and saw a landscape that I had looked upon and pored upon through all the years of that life, so that I knew how to name this thing and that thing, and give the very distances of each and every one from the "Centre-Point" of the Pyramid, which was that which has neither length nor breadth, and was made of polished metal in the Room of Mathematics, where I went daily to my studies.

To the North-West I looked, and in the wide field of my glass, saw plain the bright glare of the fire from the Red Pit, shine upwards against the underside of the vast chin of the North-West Watcher—The Watching Thing of the North-West. . . . "That which hath Watched from the Beginning, and until the opening of the Gateway of Eternity" came into my thoughts, as I looked through the glass . . . the words of Æsworpth, the *Ancient* Poet (though incredibly *future* to this our time). And suddenly they seemed at fault; for I looked deep down

into my being, and saw, as dreams are seen, the sunlight and splendour of *this* our Present Age. And I was amazed.

And here I must make it clear to all that, even as I waked from *this* Age, suddenly into *that* life, so must I—*that* youth there in the embrasure—have awakened then to the knowledge of *this* far-back life of ours—seeming to him a vision of the very beginnings of Eternity, in the dawn of the world. Oh! I do but dread I make it not sufficient clear that I and he were both *I*—the same soul. He of that far date seeing vaguely the life that *was* (that I do now live in this present Age); and I of this time beholding the life that I yet shall live. How utterly strange!

And so it was that I (fresh-born in that future time) hungered strangely for My Beautiful One with all the strength of that new life, knowing that she had been mine, and might live again, even as I. And so, as I have said, I hungered, and found that I listened.

And from that time, onward, for a little space, I was stunned with all that I knew and guessed and felt; and all of a long while the hunger grew for that one I had lost in the early days—she who had sung to me in those faery days of light, that *had been* in verity. And the especial thoughts of that age looked back with a keen, regretful wonder into the gulf of forgetfulness.

But, presently, I turned from the haze and pain of my dream-memories, once more to the inconceivable mystery of the Night Land, which I viewed through the great embrasure. For on none did it ever come with weariness to look out upon all the hideous mysteries; so that old and young watched, from early years to death, the black monstrosity of the Night Land, which this our last refuge of humanity held at bay.

To the right of the Red Pit there lay a long, sinuous glare, which I knew as the Vale of Red Fire, and beyond that for many dreary miles the blackness of the Night Land; across which came the coldness of the light from the Plain of Blue Fire.

And then, on the very borders of the Unknown Lands, there lay a range of low volcanoes, which lit up, far away in the outer darkness, the Black Hills, where shone the Seven Lights, which neither twinkled nor moved nor

faltered through Eternity; and of which even the great spy-glass could make no understanding; nor had any adventurer from the Pyramid ever come back to tell us aught of them. And here let me say, that down in the Great Library of the Redoubt, were the histories of all those, with their discoveries, who had ventured out into the monstrousness of the Night Land, risking not the life only, but the spirit of life.

To my right, which was to the North, there stood, very far away, the House of Silence, upon a low hill. And in that House were many lights, and no sound. And so had it been through an uncountable Eternity of Years. Always those steady lights, and no whisper of sound—not even such as our distance-microphones could have discovered. And the danger of this House was accounted the greatest danger of all those Lands.

And round by the House of Silence, wound the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk. And concerning this Road, which passed out of the Unknown Lands, nigh by the Place of the Ab-humans, where was always the green, luminous mist, nothing was known; save that it was held that, of all the works about the Mighty Pyramid, it was, alone, the one that was bred, long ages past, of healthy human toil and labour. And on this point alone, had a thousand books, and more, been writ; and all contrary, and so to no end, as is ever the way in such matters.

And as it was with the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, so it was with all those other monstrous things . . . whole libraries had there been made upon this and upon that; and many a thousand million mouldered into the forgotten dust of the earlier world.

I mind me now that presently I stepped upon the central travelling-roadway which spanned the one thousandth plateau of the Great Redoubt. And this lay six miles and thirty fathoms above the Plain of the Night Land, and was somewhat of a great mile or more across. And so, in a few minutes, I was at the South-Eastern wall, and looking out through The Great Embrasure towards the Three Silver-fire Holes, that shone before the Thing That Nods, away down, far in the South-East. Southward of this, but nearer, there rose the vast bulk

of the South-East Watcher—The Watching Thing of the South-East. And to the right and to the left of the squat monster burned the Torches; maybe half-a-mile upon each side; yet sufficient light they threw to show the lumbered-forward head of the never-sleeping Brute.

To the East, as I stood there in the quietness of the Sleeping-Time on the One Thousandth Plateau, I heard a far, dreadful sound, down in the lightless East; and, presently, again—a strange, dreadful laughter, deep as a low thunder among the mountains. And because this sound came odd whiles from the Unknown Lands beyond the Valley of The Hounds, we had named that far and never-seen Place "The Country Whence Comes The Great Laughter." And though I had heard the sound, many and oft a time, yet did I never hear it without a most strange thrilling of my heart, and a sense of my littleness, and of the utter terror which had beset the last millions of the world.

Yet, because I had heard the Laughter oft, I paid not over-long attention to my thoughts upon it; and when, in a little it died away into that Eastern Darkness, I turned my spy-glass upon the Giants' Pit, which lay to the South of the Giants' Kilns. And these same Kilns were tended by the giants, and the light of the Kilns was red and fitful, and threw wavering shadows and lights across the mouth of the pit; so that I saw giants crawling up out of the pit; but not properly seen, by reason of the dance of the shadows. And so, because ever there was so much to behold, I looked away, presently, to that which was plainer to be examined.

To the back of the Giants' Pit was a great, black Headland, that stood vast, between the Valley of The Hounds (where lived the monstrous Night Hounds) and the Giants. And the light of the Kilns struck the brow of this black Headland; so that, constantly, I saw things peer over the edge, coming forward a little into the light of the Kilns, and drawing back swiftly into the shadows.

And thus it had been ever, through the uncounted ages; so that the Headland was known as The Headland From Which Strange Things Peer; and thus was it marked in our maps and charts of that grim world.

And so I could go on ever ; but that I fear to weary ; and yet, whether I do weary, or not, I must tell of this country that I see, even now as I set my thoughts down, so plainly that my memory wanders in a hushed and secret fashion along its starkness, and amid its strange and dread habitants, so that it is but by an effort I realise me that my body is not there in this very moment that I write. And so to further tellings :—

Before me ran the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk ; and I searched it, as many a time in my earlier youth had I, with the spy-glass ; for my heart was always stirred mightily by the sight of those Silent Ones.

And, presently, alone in all the miles of that night-grey road, I saw one in the field of my glass—a quiet, cloaked figure, moving along, shrouded, and looking neither to right nor left. And thus was it with these beings ever. It was told about in the Redoubt that they would harm no human, if but the human did keep a fair distance from them ; but that it were wise never to come close upon one. And this I can well believe.

And so, searching the road with my gaze, I passed beyond this Silent One, and past the place where the road, sweeping vastly to the South-East, was lit a space, strangely, by the light from the Silver-fire Holes. And thus at last to where it swayed to the South of the Dark Palace, and thence Southward still, until it passed round to the Westward, beyond the mountain bulk of the Watching Thing in the South—the hugest monster in all the visible Night Lands. My spy-glass showed it to me with clearness—a living hill of watchfulness, known to us as The Watcher Of The South. It brooded there, squat and tremendous, hunched over the pale radiance of the Glowing Dome.

Much, I know, had been writ concerning this Odd, Vast Watcher ; for it had grown out of the blackness of the South Unknown Lands a million years gone ; and the steady growing nearness of it had been noted and set out at length by the men they called Monstruwacans ; so that it was possible to search in our libraries, and learn of the very coming of this Beast in the olden-time.

And, when I mind me, there were even then, and always, men named Monstruwacans, whose duty it was to take

heed of the great Forces, and to watch the Monsters and the Beasts that beset the great Pyramid, and measure and record, and have so full a knowledge of these same that, did one but sway an head in the darkness, the same matter was set down with particularness in the Records.

And, so to tell more about the South Watcher. A million years gone, as I have told, came it out from the blackness of the South, and grew steadily nearer through twenty thousand years; but so slow that in no one year could a man perceive that it had moved.

Yet it had movement, and had come thus far upon its road to the Redoubt, when the Glowing Dome rose out of the ground before it—growing slowly. And this had stayed the way of the Monster; so that through an eternity it had looked towards the Pyramid across the pale glare of the Dome, and seeming to have no power to advance nearer.

And because of this, much had been writ to prove that there were other forces than evil at work in the Night Lands, about the Last Redoubt. And this I have always thought to be wisely said; and, indeed, there to be no doubt to the matter, for there were many things in the time of which I have knowledge, which seemed to make clear that, even as the Forces of Darkness were loose upon the End of Man; so were there other Forces out to do battle with the Terror; though in ways most strange and unthought of by the human mind. And of this I shall have more to tell anon.

And here, before I go further with my telling, let me set out some of that knowledge which yet remains so clear within my mind and heart. Of the coming of these monstrosities and evil Forces, no man could say much with verity; for the evil of it began before the Histories of the Great Redoubt were shaped; aye, even before the sun had lost all power to light; though, it must not be a thing of certainty, that even at this far time the invisible, black heavens held no warmth for this world; but of this I have no room to tell; and must pass on to that of which I have a more certain knowledge.

The evil must surely have begun in the Days of the Darkening (which I might liken to a story which was believed doubtfully, much as we of this day believe the

story of the Creation). A dim record there was of olden sciences (that are yet far off in *our* future) which disturbing the unmeasurable Outward Powers, had allowed to pass the Barrier of Life some of those Monsters and Ab-human creatures, which are so wondrously cushioned from us at this normal present. And thus there had materialised, and in other cases developed, grotesque and horrible Creatures, which now beset the humans of this world. And where there was no power to take on material form there had been allowed to certain dreadful Forces to have power to affect the life of the human spirit. And this growing very dreadful, and the world full of lawlessness and degeneracy, there had banded together the sound millions, and built the Last Redoubt; there in the twilight of the world (so it seems to us), and yet to them (bred at last to the peace of usage) as it were the Beginning; and this I can make no clearer; and none hath right to expect it; for my task is very great, and beyond the power of human skill.

And when the humans had built the great Pyramid, it had one thousand three hundred and twenty floors; and the thickness of each floor was according to the strength of its need. And the whole height of this pyramid exceeded seven miles, by near a mile, and above it was a tower from which the Watchman looked (these being called the Monstruwacans). But where the Redoubt was built, I know not; save that I believe in a mighty valley, of which I may tell more in due time.

And when the Pyramid was built, the last millions, who were the Builders thereof, went within, and made themselves a great house and city of this Last Redoubt. And thus began the Second History of this world. And how shall I set it all down in these little pages! For my task, even as I see it, is too great for the power of a single life and a single pen. Yet, to it!

And, later, through hundreds and thousands of years, there grew up in the Outer Lands, beyond those which lay under the guard of the Redoubt, mighty and lost races of terrible creatures, half men and half beast, and evil and dreadful; and these made war upon the Redoubt; but were beaten off from that grim, metal mountain, with a vast slaughter. Yet, must there have been many

such attacks, until the electric circle was put about the Pyramid, and lit from the Earth-Current. And the lowest half-mile of the Pyramid was sealed; and so at last there was a peace, and the beginnings of that Eternity of quiet watching for the day when the Earth-Current shall become exhausted.

And, at whiles, through the forgotten centuries, had the Creatures been glutted time and again upon such odd bands of daring ones as had adventured forth to explore through the mystery of the Night Lands; for of those who went, scarce any did ever return; for there were eyes in all that dark; and Powers and Forces abroad which had all knowledge; or so we must fain believe.

And then, so it would seem, as that Eternal Night lengthened itself upon the world, the power of terror grew and strengthened. And fresh and greater monsters developed and bred out of all space and Outward Dimensions, attracted, even as it might be Infernal sharks, by that lonely and mighty hill of humanity, facing its end—so near to the Eternal, and yet so far deferred in the minds and to the senses of those humans. And thus hath it been ever.

And all this but by the way, and vague and ill told, and set out in despair to make a little clear the beginnings of that State which is so strange to our conceptions, and yet which had become a Condition of Naturalness to Humanity in that stupendous future.

Thus had the giants come, fathered of bestial humans and mothered of monsters. And many and diverse were the creatures which had some human semblance; and intelligence, mechanical and cunning; so that certain of these lesser Brutes had machinery and underground ways, having need to secure to themselves warmth and air, even as healthy humans; only that they were incredibly inured to hardship, as they might be wolves set in comparison with tender children. And surely, do I make this thing clear?

And now to continue my telling concerning the Night Land. The Watcher of the South was, as I have set to make known, a monster differing from those other Watching Things, of which I have spoken, and of which there were in all four. One to the North-West, and

one to the South-East, and of these I have told; and the other twain lay brooding, one to the South-West, and the other to the North-East; and thus the four watchers kept ward through the darkness, upon the Pyramid, and moved not, neither gave they out any sound. Yet did we know them to be mountains of living watchfulness and hideous and steadfast intelligence.

And so, in a while, having listened to the sorrowful sound which came ever to us over the Grey Dunes, from the Country of Wailing, which lay to the South, midway between the Redoubt and the Watcher of the South, I passed upon one of the moving roadways over to the South-Western side of the Pyramid, and looked from a narrow embrasure thence far down into the Deep Valley, which was four miles deep, and in which was the Pit of the Red Smoke.

And the mouth of this Pit was one full mile across, and the smoke of the Pit filled the Valley at times, so that it seemed but as a glowing red circle amid dull thunderous clouds of redness. Yet the red smoke rose never much above the Valley; so that there was clear sight across to the country beyond. And there, along the further edge of that great depth, were the Towers, each, maybe, a mile high, grey and quiet; but with a shimmer upon them.

Beyond these, South and West of them, was the enormous bulk of the South-West Watcher, and from the ground rose what we named the Eye Beam—a single ray of grey light, which came up out of the ground, and lit the right eye of the monster. And because of this light, that eye had been mightily examined through unknown thousands of years; and some held that the eye looked through the light steadfastly at the Pyramid; but others set out that the light blinded it, and was the work of those Other Powers which were abroad to do combat with the Evil Forces. But however this may be, as I stood there in the embrasure, and looked at the thing through the spy-glass, it seemed to my soul that the Brute looked straightly at me, unwinking and steadfast, and fully of a knowledge that I spied upon it. And this is how I felt.

To the North of this, in the direction of the West

I saw The Place Where The Silent Ones Kill; and this was so named, because there, maybe ten thousand years gone, certain humans adventuring from the Pyramid, came off the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, and into that place, and were immediately destroyed. And this was told by one who escaped; though he died also very quickly; for his heart was frozen. And this I cannot explain; but so it was set out in the Records.

And so have I set out something of that land, and of those creatures and circumstances which beset us about, waiting until the Day of Doom, when our Earth-Current should cease, and leave us helpless to the Watchers and the Abundant Terror.

And there I stood, and looked forth composedly, as may one who has been born to know of such matters, and reared in the knowledge of them. And, anon, I would look upward, and see the grey, metalled mountain going up measureless into the gloom of the everlasting night; and from my feet the sheer downward sweep of the grim, metal walls, six full miles, and more, to the plain below.

And one thing (aye! and I fear me, many) have I missed to set out with particularness:—

There was, as you do know, all around the base of the Pyramid, which was five and one-quarter miles every way, a great circle of light, which was set up by the Earth-Current, and burned within a transparent tube; or had that appearance. And it bounded the Pyramid for a clear mile upon every side, and burned for ever; and none of the monsters had power ever to pass across, because of what we did call The Air Clog that it did make, as an invisible Wall of Safety. And it did give out also a more subtile vibration, that did affect the weak Brain-Elements of the monsters and the Lower Men-Brutes. And some did hold that there went from it a further vibration of a greater subtileness that gave a protecting against the Evil Forces. And some quality it had truly thiswise; for the Evil Powers had no ability to cause harm to any within. Yet were there some dangers against which it might not avail; but these had no cunning to bring harm to any *within* the Great Redoubt who had wisdom to meddle with no dreadfulness. And so

were those last millions guarded until the Earth-Current should be used to its end. And this circle is that which I have called the Electric Circle; though with failure to explain. But there it was called only, The Circle.

And thus have I, with great effort, made a little clear that grim land of night, where, presently, my listening heard one calling across the dark. And how that this grew upon me, I will set out forthwith.

CHAPTER III

THE QUIET CALLING

Now, oft had I heard tell, not only in that great city which occupied the thousandth floor, but in others of the one thousand, three hundred and twenty cities of the Pyramid, that there was somewhere out in the desolation of the Night Lands a second Place of Refuge, where had gathered, in another part of this dead world, some last millions of the human race, to fight unto the end.

And this story I heard everywhere in my travels through the cities of the great Redoubt, which travels began when I came upon my seventeenth year, and continued for three years and two hundred and twenty-five days being even then but one day in each city, as was the custom in the training of every child.

And truly it was a great journey, and in it I met with many, whom to know was to love; but whom never could I see again; for life has not space enough; and each must to his duty to the security and well-being of the Redoubt. Yet, for all that I have set down, we travelled much, always; but there were so many millions, and so few years.

And, as I have said, everywhere I went there was the same story of this other Place of Refuge; and in such of the Libraries of those cities as I had time to search, there were great numbers of works upon the existence of this other Refuge; and some, far back in the years, made assertion with confidence that such a Place was in verity; and, indeed, no doubt did there seem in those by-gone ages; but now these very Records were read

only by Scholars, who doubted, even whilst they read. And so is it ever.

But of the reality of this Refuge, I had never a sound doubt, from the day of my hearing concerning it from our Master Monstruwacan, who with all his assistants occupied the Tower of Observation in the apex of the Pyramid. And here let me tell that he and I had always an affinity and close friendship one for the other; though he was full grown, and I but a youth; yet so it was; and thus, when I had come to an age of twenty-one years of life, he opened to me a post within the Tower of Observation; and this was a most wondrous good fortune to me; for in all the vast Redoubt, to be appointed to the Tower of Observation was the most desired; for thereby, even as in these days doth Astronomy, was the natural curiosity of Man eased somewhat, even while thwarted.

Now, let me tell here also, lest it be thought that I was unduly favoured because of my friendship with the Master Monstruwacan, that there was a sound justification for his choice, in that to me had been given that strange gift of hearing, which we called Night-Hearing; though this was but a fanciful name, and meant little. Yet the peculiar gift was rare, and in all the millions of the Pyramid, there was none with the gift to a great degree, saving only myself.

And I, because of this gift, could hear the "invisible vibrations" of the æther; so that, without harking to the calling of our recording instruments, I could take the messages which came continually through the eternal darkness; aye, even better than they. And now, it may be the better understood, how much was to be counted that I had grown to listen for a voice that had not rung in mine ears for an eternity, and yet which sang sweet and clear in my memory-dreams; so that it seemed to me that Mirdath the Beautiful slept within my soul, and whispered to me out of all the ages.

And then, one day, at the fifteenth hour, when began the Sleep-Time, I had been pondering this love of mine that lived with me still; and marvelling that my memory-dreams held the voice of a love that *had been* in so remote an age. And pondering and dreaming thus, as a young

man may, I could fancy this æon-lost One were whispering beauty into my ears, in verity; so clear had my memory grown, and so much had I pondered.

And lo! as I stood there, harking and communing with my thoughts, I thrilled suddenly, as if I had been smitten; for out of all the everlasting night a whisper was thrilling and thrilling upon my more subtile hearing.

Through four long years had I listened, since that awakening in the embrasure, when but a youth of seventeen; and now out of the world-darkness and all the eternal years of that lost life, which now I live in this Present Age of ours, was the whisper come; for I knew it upon that instant; and yet, because I was so taught to wisdom, I answered by no name; but sent the Master-Word through the night—sending it with my brain-elements, as I could, and as all may, much or little, as may be, if they be not clods. And, moreover, I knew that she who called quietly would have the power to hear without instruments, if indeed it were she; and if it were but one of the false callings of the Evil Forces, or more cunning monsters, or as was sometimes thought concerning these callings, the House of Silence, meddling with our souls, then would they have no power to say the Master-Word; for this had been proven through all the Everlasting.

And lo! as I stood, trembling and striving not to be tense, which destroys the receptivity, there came thrilling round and round my spiritual essence the throb of the Master-Word, beating steadily in the night, as doth that marvellous sound. And then, with all that was sweet in my spirit, I called with my brain-elements:—"Mirdath! Mirdath! Mirdath!" And at that instant the Master Monstruwacan entered that part of the Tower of Observation, where I stood; and, seeing my face, stood very quiet; for though he had not the power of Night-Hearing, he was wise and thoughtful, and took much account of my gift; moreover, he had but come from the Receiving Instrument, and thought vaguely to have caught the throb of the Master-Word, though too faint to come proper through the Instrument, so that he searched for me, in that I, who had the Hearing, might listen for it, I being, as I have said, gifted in that wise.

And to him I told something of my story and my thoughts and my memories, and of that awakening; and thus up to this present happening, and he hearkened with sympathy and a troubled and wondering heart, for in that age a man might talk sanely upon that which, in this age of ours would be accounted foolishness and maybe the breathings of insanity; for there, by the refinement of arts of mentality and the results of strange experiments and the accomplishment of learning, men were able to conceive of matters now closed to our conceptions, even as we of this day may haply give a calm ear to talk, that in the days of our fathers would have been surely set to the count of lunacy. And this is very clear.

And all the while that I told my story, I listened with my spirit; but save for a sense of faint, happy laughter that wrapped about me, I heard naught. And nothing more all that day.

Here let me put down that, because of my memories and half memories, I would time and again dispute with our learned men; they being in doubt as to the verity of that olden story of the Days of Light, and the existence of the Sun; though something of all this was set out, as of *truth*, in our oldest records; but I, remembering, told them many tales that seemed fairy-like to them, and entranced their hearts, even whilst I angered their brains, which refused to take seriously and as verity that which their hearts accepted gladly, even as we receive the wonder of poetry into our souls. But the Master Monstruwacan would listen to aught I had to tell; aye! though I spoke through hours; and so it would be, odd times, that having talked long, drawing my stories from my memory-dreams, I would come back again into the present of that Future; and lo! all the Monstruwacans would have left their instruments and observations and recording, and be gathered about me; and the Master so sunken in interest that he not to have discovered them; neither had I noticed, being so full of the things which had been.

But when the Master came back to knowledge of that present, he would rouse and chide, and they, all those lesser ones, would fly swiftly and guiltily to their various

works; and yet, so I have thought since, each with a muddled and bewildered and thoughtful air upon him; and hungry they were for more, and ever wondering and setting questions about.

But the Master Monstruwacan believed from the beginning, and was wise always to understand; so that I loved him for this, as for many another dear quality.

And so, as may be conceived, among all those millions I was singled out to be known; for the stories that I told went downward through a thousand cities; and, presently, in the lowest tier of the Underground Fields, an hundred miles deep in the earth below the Redoubt, I found that the very ploughboys knew something concerning my tellings; and gathered about me one time and another when the Master Monstruwacan and I had gone down, regarding some matter that dealt with the Earth-Current and our Instruments.

And of the Underground Fields (though in that age we called them no more than "The Fields") I should set down a little; for they were the mightiest work of this world; so that even the Last Redoubt was but a small thing beside them. An hundred miles deep lay the lowest of the Underground Fields, and was an hundred miles from side to side, every way; and above it there were three hundred and six fields, each one less in area than that beneath; and in this wise they tapered, until the topmost field which lay direct beneath the lowermost floor of the Great Redoubt, was but four miles every way.

And thus it will be seen that these fields, lying one beneath the other, formed a mighty and incredible Pyramid of Country Lands in the deep earth, an hundred miles from the base unto the topmost field.

And the whole was sheathed-in at the sides with the grey metal of which the Redoubt was builded; and each field was pillared, and floored beneath the soil, with this same compound of wonder; and so was it secure, and the monsters could not dig into that mighty garden from without.

And all of that Underground Land was lit, where needed, by the Earth-Current, and that same life-stream fructified

the soil, and gave life and blood to the plants and to the trees, and to every bush and natural thing.

And the making of those Fields had taken maybe a million years, and the "dump" thereof had been cast into the "Crack," whence came the Earth-Current, and which had bottom beyond all soundings.

Yet that there were wise and justly promoted winds in that Underground Country, I do know; for healthful and sweet they were, and in the corn-fields there was the sweet rustle of grain, and the glad, silken laughter of poppies, all beneath a warm and happy light. And here, did the millions walk and take excursion, and go orderly or not, even as in these days.

And all this have I seen, and the talk of a thousand lovers in the gardens of that place, comes back to me; and with it all the memory of my dear one; and of a faint calling that would seem to whisper about me at times; but so faint and attentuated, that even I, who had the Night-Hearing, could not catch its import; and so went, listening ever the more intently. And oft times calling.

Now there was a Law in the Pyramid, tried and healthful, which held that no male should have freedom to adventure into the Night Land, before the age of twenty-two; *and no female ever.* Yet that, after such age, if a youth desired greatly to make the adventure, he should receive three lectures upon the dangers of which we had knowledge, and a strict account of the mutilatings and horrid deeds done to those who had so adventured. And if, after this had passed over him, he still desired, and if he were accounted healthful and sane; then should he be allowed to make the adventure; and it was accounted honour to the youth who should add to the knowledge of the Pyramid.

But to all such as went forth into the danger of the Night Land, there was set beneath the skin of the inner side of the left forearm, a small capsule, and when the wound had healed, then might the youth make the adventure.

And the wherefore of this, was that the spirit of the youth might be saved, if he were entrapped; for then, upon the honour of his soul, must he bite forth the capsule,

and immediately his spirit would have safety in death. And by this shall you know somewhat the grim and horrid danger of the Dark Land.

And this I have set down because later I was to make huge adventure into those Lands; and even at this time, some thought of the same had come to me; for always I went listening for that quiet calling; and twice I sent the Master-Word throbbing solemnly through the everlasting night; yet this I did no more, without certainty; for the Word must not be used lightly. But often would I say with my brain-elements "Mirdath! Mirdath!"—sending the name out into the darkness; and sometimes would I seem to hear the faint thrilling of the æther around me; as though one answered; but weakly, as it were with a weakened spirit, or by instrument that lacked of its earth-force.

And thus, for a great while there was no certainty; but only a strange anxiousness and no clear answer.

Then, one day as I stood by the instruments in the Tower of Observation, at the thirteenth hour there came the thrilling of beaten æther all about me, as it were that all the void was disturbed. And I made the Sign for Silence; so that the men moved not in all the Tower; but bowed over their breathing-bells, that all disturbance might cease.

And again came the gentle thrilling, and broke out into a clear, low calling in my brain; and the calling was my name—the old-earth name of this day, and not the name of that age. And the name smote me, with a frightenedness of fresh awakening memories. And, immediately, I sent the Master-Word into the night; and all the æther was full of movement. And a silence came; and later a beat afar off in the void of night, which only I in all that great Redoubt could hear, until the heavier vibrations were come. And in a moment there was all about me the throbbing of the Master-Word, beating in the night a sure answer. Yet, before this I knew that Mirdath had called; but now had surety.

And immediately, I said "Mirdath," making use of the instruments; and there came a swift and beautiful answer; for out of the dark there stole an old love-name, that she only had ever used to me.

And, presently, I minded me of the men, and signed to them that they should continue; for the Records must not be broken; and now I had the communication full established.

And by me stood the Master Monstruwacan, quietly as any young Monstruwacan, waiting with slips to make any notes that were needful; and keeping a strict eye upon those others; but not unkindly. And so, for a space of wonder, I had speech with that girl out in the darkness of the world, who had knowledge of my name, and of the old-earth love-name, and named herself Mirdath.

And much I questioned her, and presently to my sorrow, for it seemed that her name was not truly Mirdath; but Naani; neither had she known my name; but that in the library of that place where she abode, there had been a story of one named by my name, and called by that sweet love-name which she had sent out somewhat ruthless into the night; and the girl's name had been Mirdath; and when first she, Naani had called, there had come back to her a cry of Mirdath, Mirdath; and this had minded her so strangely of that olden story which had stayed in her memory; that she had answered as the maid in that book might have answered.

And thus did it seem that the utter Romance of my Memory-love had vanished, and I stood strangely troubled for sorrow of a love of olden times. Yet, even then I marvelled that any book should have story so much like to mine; not heeding that the history of all love is writ with one pen.

Yet, even then in that hour of my strange, and quaintly foolish pain, there came a thing that set me thrilling; though more afterwards, when I came to think afresh upon it. For the girl who spoke to me through the night made some wonder that my voice were not deeper; yet in quiet fashion, and as one who says a thing, scarce wotting what they say. But even to me then, there came a sudden hope; for in the olden days of this Present Age my voice had been very deep. And I said to her that maybe the man in the book was said to have had a deep tone of speech; but she, seeming puzzled, said nay; and at that I questioned her the more; but only to the trouble of her memory and understanding.

And strange must it seem that we two should talk on so trivial a matter, when there was so much else that we had need to exchange thought upon; for were a man in this present day to have speech with those who may live within that red planet of Mars within the sky, scarce could the wonder of it exceed the wonder of a human voice coming through that night unto the Great Redoubt, out of all that lost darkness. For, indeed, this must have been the breaking of, maybe, a million years of silence.

Now concerning the voice of this girl coming to us through the darkness of the world, I will set out that which she had to tell; and this, indeed, but verified the tellings of our most ancient Records, which had so long been treated over lightly:—There was, it would seem, somewhere out in the lonesome dark of the Outer Lands, but at what distance none could ever discover, a second Redoubt; that was a three-sided Pyramid, and moderate small; being no more than a mile in height, and scarce three-quarters of a mile along the bases.

When this Redoubt was first builded, it had been upon the far shore of a sea, where now was no sea; and it had been raised by those wandering humans who had grown weary of wandering, and weary of the danger of night attacks by the tribes of half-human monsters which began to inhabit the earth even so early as the days when the half-gloom was upon the world. And he that had made the plan upon which it was builded, was one who had seen the Great Redoubt, having lived there in the beginning, but escaped because of a correction set upon him for his spirit of irresponsibility, which had made him to cause disturbance among the orderly ones in the lowest city of the Great Redoubt.

Yet, in time, he too had come to be tamed by the weight of fear of the ever-growing hordes of monsters, and the Forces that were abroad. And so he, being a master-spirit, planned and builded the smaller Redoubt, being aided thereto by four millions, who also were weary of the harass of the monsters; but until then had been wanderers, because of the restlessness of their blood.

And they had chosen that place, because there they had discovered a sign of the Earth-Current in a great valley

which led to the shore; for without the Earth-Current no Refuge could have existence. And whilst many builded and guarded, and cared for the Great Camp in which all lived, others worked within a great shaft; and in ten years had made this to a distance of many miles, and therewith they tapt the Earth-Current; but not a great stream; yet a sufficiency, as was believed.

And presently, after many years, they had builded the Pyramid, and taken up their refuge there, and made them instruments, and ordained Monstruwacans; so that they had speech daily with the Great Pyramid; and thus for many long ages.

And the Earth-Current then to begin to fail; and though they laboured through many thousands of years, they came to no better resource. And so it was they ceased to have communication with the Great Redoubt; for the current had a lack of power to work the instruments; and the recording instruments ceased to be sensible of our messages.

And thereafter came a million years, maybe, of silence; with ever the birthing and marrying and dying of those lonesome humans. And they grew less; and some put this to the lack of the Earth-Current, which dwindled slowly through the centuries of that Eternity.

And once in a thousand years, maybe, one among them would be Sensitive, and abled to hear beyond ordinary and to these, at times, there would seem to come the thrilling of the æther; so that such an one would go listening; and sometimes seem to catch half messages; and so awaken a great interest in all the Pyramid; and there would be turning up of old Records, and many words and writings, and attempts to send the Master-Word through the night; in which, doubtless sometimes they succeeded; for there was set down in the Records of the Great Redoubt certain occasions on which there had come the call of the Master-Word, which had been arranged and made holy between the two Redoubts in the early days of that second life of this world.

Yet, now for an hundred thousand years, there had been none Sensitive; and in that time the people of the Pyramid had become no more than ten thousand;

and the Earth-Current was weak and powerless to put the joy of life into them; so that they went listlessly; but deemed it not strange, because of so many æons of usage.

And then, to the wonder of all, the Earth-Current had put forth a new power; so that young people ceased to be old over-soon; and there was happiness and a certain joy in the living; and a strange birthing of children, such as had not been through half a million years.

And then came a new thing. Naani, the daughter of the Master Monstruwacan of that Redoubt, had shown to all that she was Sensitive; for she had perceived odd vibrations afloat in the night; and concerning these she told her father; and presently, because their blood moved afresh in their bodies, they had heart to discover the plans of the ancient instruments; for the instruments had long rusted, and been forgotten.

And so they builded them a new instrument to send forth a message; for they had no memory at that time that the brain-elements had power to do thus; though, mayhap, their brain-elements were weakened, through so many ages of starvation of the Earth-Current, and could not have obeyed, even had their masters known all that we of the Great Redoubt knew.

And when the instrument was finished, to Naani was given the right to call first across the dark, to discover whether indeed, after that million years of silence, they were yet companied upon this earth, or whether they were in truth lonely—the last poor thousands of the Humans.

And a great and painful excitement came upon the people of the lesser pyramid; for the loneliness of the world pressed upon them; and it was to them as though we in this age called to a star across the abyss of space.

And because of the excitement and pain of the moment, Naani called only vaguely with the instrument into the dark, and lo! in a moment, as it seemed, there came all about her in the night the solemn throb of the Master-Word, beating in the night. And Naani cried out that she was answered, and, as may be thought, many of the people wept, and some prayed, and some were silent;

but others beseeched her that she call again and quickly to have further speech with those of their kind.

And Naani spoke the Master-Word into the night, and directly there came a calling all about her:—"Mirdath! Mirdath!" and the strange wonder of it made her silent a moment; but when she would have made reply, the instrument had ceased to work, and she could have no further speech at that time.

This, as may be thought, occasioned much distress; and constant work they had between the instrument and the Earth-Current, to discover the reason for this failing; but could not for a great while. And in that time, oft did Naani hear the call of "Mirdath" thrilling about her; and twice there came the solemn beat of the Master-Word in the night. Yet never had she the power to answer. And all that while, as I learned in time, was she stirred with a quaint ache at heart by the voice that called "Mirdath!" As it might be the Spirit of Love searching for its mate; for this is how she put it.

And thus it chanced, that the constant thrilling of this name about her, woke her to memory of a book she had read in early years, and but half understood; for it was ancient, and writ in an olden fashion, and it set out the love of a man and a maid, and the maid's name was Mirdath. And so, because she was full of this great awakening of those ages of silence, and the calling of that name, she found the book again, and read it many times, and grew to a sound love of the beauty of that tale.

And, presently, when the instrument was made right, she called into the night the name of that man within the book; and so it came about that I had hoped too much; yet even now was I strangely unsure whether to cease from hoping.

And after Naani had made clear all that I have set out concerning the Lesser Refuge, she told further how that food was not plentiful with them; though, until the reawakening of the Earth-Current, they had gone unknowing of this, being of small appetite, and caring little for aught; but now wakened, and newly hungry, they savoured a lack of taste in all that they ate; and

this we could well conceive, from our reasonings and theory; but happily not from our knowledge.

And we said unto them, that the soil had lost its life, and the crops therefrom were not vital; and a great while it would take for the earth within their pyramid to receive back the life-elements. And we told them certain ways by which they might bring a more speedy life to the soil; and this they were eager to do, being freshly alive after so long a time of half-life.

And now, you must know that in all the great Redoubt the story went downwards swiftly, and was published in all the Hour-Sheets, with many comments; and the libraries were full of those who would look up the olden Records, which for so long had been forgotten, or taken, as we of this day would say, with a pinch of salt.

And all the time I was pestered with questions; so that, had I not been determined, I should scarce have been allowed sleep; moreover, so much was writ about me, and my power to hear, and divers stories concerning tales of love, that I had been like to have grown mazed to take note of it all; yet some note I did take, and much I found pleasant; but some displeasing.

And, for the rest, I was not spoiled, as the saying goes; for I had my work to do; moreover, I was always busied Listening, and having speech through the darkness. Though if any saw me so, they would question; and because of this, I kept much to the Tower of Observation, where was the Master Monstruwacan, and a greater discipline.

And constantly, and at all hours, I would have speech with Naani of the Lesser Redoubt; for I had taught her how she might send her thoughts through the night, with her brain-elements; but not to over-use this power; for it exhausts the body and the powers of the mind, if it be abused by exceeding usage.

Yet, despite that I had taught her the use of her brain-elements, she sent her message always without strength, save when she had use of the instrument; and this I set to the cause that she had not the health force needful; but, apart from this, she had the Night-Hearing very keen; though less than mine.

And so, with many times of speech, and constant tellings of our doings and thoughts, we drew near in the spirit to one another ; and had always a feeling in our hearts that we had been given previous acquaintance.

And this, as may be thought, thrilled my heart very strangely.

CHAPTER IV

THE HUSHING OF THE VOICE

("Dearest, thine own feet tread the world at night—
Treading, as moon-flakes step across a dark—
Kissing the very dew to holier light . . . .
Thy Voice a song past mountains, which to hark
Frightens my soul with an utter lost delight.")

Now, one night, towards the end of the sixteenth hour as I made ready to sleep, there came all about me the thrilling of the æther, as happened oft in those days; but the thrilling had a strange power in it; and in my soul the voice of Naani sounded plain, all within and about me.

Yet, though I knew it to be the voice of Naani, I answered not immediately; save to send the sure question of the Master-Word into the night. And, directly, I heard the answer, the Master-Word beating steadily in the night; and I questioned Naani why she had speech with me by the Instrument at that time, when all were sleeping, and the watch set among the Monstruwacans; for they in the little Pyramid had their sleep-time to commence at the eleventh hour; so that by this it was five hours advanced towards the time of waking; and Naani should have slept; nor have been abroad to the Tower of Observation, apart from her father. For I supposed that she spoke by the Instrument, her voice sounding very clear in my brain. Yet, to this question, she made no answer in kind; but gave a certain thing into my spirit, which set me trembling; for she said certain words, that began:—

"Dearest, thine own feet tread the world at night——"

And it well may be that she set me to tremble; for as the words grew about me, there wakened a memory-dream how that I had made these same words to Mirdath the Beautiful in the long-gone Eternity of this our Age, when she had died and left me alone in all the world. And I was weak a little with the tumult and force of my emotion; but in a moment I called eagerly with my brain-elements to Naani to give some explaining of this thing that she had spoken to the utter troubling of my heart.

Yet, once more she made no direct answer; but spoke the words again to me across all the dark of the world. And it came to me suddenly, that it was not Naani that spoke; but Mirdath the Beautiful, from out of all the everlasting night. And I called:—"Mirdath! Mirdath!" with my brain-elements, into the night; and lo! the far, faint voice spoke again to my spirit through all the darkness of eternity, saying again those words. Yet, though the voice was the voice of Mirdath the Beautiful, it was also the voice of Naani; and I knew in all my heart that this thing was in verity; and that it had been given to me to be birthed once more into this world in the living-time of that Only One, with whom my spirit and essence hath mated in all ages through the everlasting. And I called with my brain-elements and all my strength to Naani; but there came no answer; neither sign of hearing, though through hours I called.

And thus at last I came to an utter exhaustion; but neither could be quiet, nor sleep. Yet, presently, I slept.

And when I waked, my first memory was of the wondrous thing which had befallen in the sleep-time; for none in all this world could have known those words; save it has been the spirit of Mirdath, my Beautiful One, looking from above my shoulder in that utter-lost time, as I made those words to her, out of an aching and a broken heart. And the voice had been the voice of Mirdath; and the voice of Mirdath had been the voice of Naani. And what shall any say to this, save that which I had in my heart.

And immediately I called to Naani, once, and again twice; and in a little moment there came all about me the throbbing of the Master-Word, beating solemnly in

the night; and I sent the Master-Word, to give assurance, and immediately the voice of Naani, a little weak as was it always when she had not the Instrument, but sent the message with her brain-elements.

And I answered her, and questioned her eagerly concerning her sayings of the past time of sleep; but she disclaimed, and made clear to me that she had no knowledge of having spoken; but had slept through all that time of which I made to tell; and, indeed, had dreamed a very strange dream.

And for a little while I was confused, and meditated, not knowing what to think; but came suddenly again to a knowledge that Naani's far voice was thrilling the æther all about; and that she would tell to me her dream; which had set strong upon her mind.

And she told the dream to me, and in the dream she had seen a tall, dark man, built very big, and dressed in unfamiliar clothing. And the man had been in a little room, and very sorrowful, and lonesome; and in her dream she had gone nigh to him.

And presently the man made to write, that he might ease him by giving expression to his sorrow; and Naani had been able to read the words that he wrote; though to her waking spirit the language in which they were writ was strange and unknown. Yet she could not remember what he had writ, save but one short line, and this she had mind of in that he had writ the word Mirdath above. And she spoke of the strangeness of this thing, that she should dream of this name; but supposed that I had fixed it upon her, by my first callings.

And then did I, with something of a tremble in my spirit, ask Naani to tell me what she remembered of the writing of that big, sorrowful stranger. And, in a little moment, her far voice said these words all about me:—

"Dearest, thine own feet tread the world at night——"

But no more had she memory of. Yet it was a sufficiency; and I, maybe with a mad, strange triumph in my soul, said unto her with my brain-elements that which remained of those words. And my spirit felt them strike upon

the spirit of Naani, and awake her memory, as with the violence of a blow. And for a little while she stumbled, dumb before so much newness and certainty. And her spirit then to waken, and she near wept with the fright and the sudden, new wonder of this thing.

And immediately, all about me there came her voice thrilling, and the voice was the voice of Mirdath, and the voice of Naani; and I heard the tears of her spirit make pure and wonderful the bewildered and growing gladness of her far voice. And she asked me, as one who had suddenly opened the Gates of Memory, whether she might be truly Mirdath. And I, utter weak and shaken strangely because of this splendour of fulfilment, could make no instant answer. And she asked again, but using mine old love-name, and with a sureness in her far voice. And still I was so strangely dumb, and the blood to thud peculiar in mine ears; and this to pass; and speech to come swift.

And this way to be that meeting of our spirits, across all the everlasting night.

And now, whilst I pondered this matter in all my spirit and being, how that I should some way come to Naani, there befell a very terrible thing. And in this wise must I tell it:—

It was at the seventeenth hour, when all the millions of the Mighty Pyramid slept, that I was with the Master Monstruwacan in the Tower of Observation taking my due turn. And sudden, I heard the thrilling of the æther all about me, and the voice of Naani in my soul, speaking. And I sent the Master-Word into the darkness of the world, and presently, I heard the solemn answer beating steadfastly in the night; and immediately I called to Naani with my brain-elements, to know what thing troubled her in her sleep.

And her voice came into my spirit, weak and far and faint, and so that scarce I could make to hear the words. Yet, in a while I gathered that all the peoples of the Lesser Redoubt were in very deadly trouble; for that the Earth-Current had failed suddenly and mightily; and they had called her from her sleep, that she might listen whether we answered their callings by the Instrument; but, indeed, no calling had come to us.

And they who had been of late so joyful, were now grown old with sorrow in but an hour or two; for they feared that the fresh coming of the Earth-Current had been but the final flicker and outburst before the end. And, even in this short while of our speech, did it seem to me that the voice of Naani grew further off from me; and I felt like to have broken my heart with the trouble of this thing.

And through all that remained of that sleep-time, did I converse with Naani, as might two lovers who shall presently part for ever. And when the cities awoke, the news went throughout them, and all our millions were in sorrow and trouble.

And thus was it for, maybe, a little month; and in that time had the voice of Naani grown so weak and far-off that even I that had the Night-Hearing, could scarce make real its meaning. And every word was to me a treasure and a touch upon my soul; and my grief and trouble before this certain parting drove me that I could not eat, neither have rest; and this did the Master Monstruwacan take upon him to chide and correct; for that, if any were to help, how should it be done if I that had the Night-Hearing, and heard even now that the recording Instruments were dumb, came to ill-health.

And because of this, and such wisdom as was mine, I made to eat and order my life that I might have my full powers. Yet was this beyond all my strength; for, presently, I knew that the people of the Lesser Pyramid were threatened by the monsters that beset them; and later I had knowledge from faint, far words whispered in my brain, that there had been a fight with an outside Force that had harmed many in their minds; so that in madness they had opened the gate and had run from the Lesser Pyramid, out into the darkness of the Lands about them; and there had their physical bodies fallen to the monsters of those Lands; but of their souls who may know?

That same night, in the Eighteenth Hour, there was a great disturbance in the æther about the Mighty Pyramid; and I was awakened suddenly by the Master Monstruwacan; that I might use my gift of the Night-Hearing to hearken for the throbbing of the Master-Word, which

they had thought to come vaguely through the Instruments; but no one of the Monstruwacans was sensitive enough of soul to account truly whether this was so.

And lo! as I sat up in the bed, there came the sound of the Master-Word, beating in the night about the Pyramid. And immediately there was a crying in the æther all about me:—"We are coming! We are coming!"

And mine inwards leaped and sickened me a moment so shaken was I with a sudden belief; for the message seemed some ways to come to me from very near to the Great Redoubt; as that they who sent it were nigh to hand.

And, forthwith, I called the Master-Word into the night; but no answer did there come for a while, and then a faint thrilling of the æther about me, and the weak pulse of the Master-Word in the night, sent by a far voice, strangely distant. And I knew that the voice was the voice of Naani; and I put a question through all the darkness of the dead world, whether she were within the Lesser Redoubt, and safe thus far.

And presently, there came a faint disturbance about me, and a small voice in my soul, speaking weakly and out of an infinite distance; and I knew that far away through the night Naani spoke feebly, with her brain-elements; and that she abode within the Lesser Pyramid; but that she too had heard that strange pulse of the Master-Word in the night, and that message:—"We are coming! We are coming!" And vastly had this thing disturbed her, waking her within her sleep; so that she knew not what to think; save that we were devising some method to come to them.

But this I removed from doubt, saying that she must not build on vain hoping; for I would not have her doubly tortured by the vanity of such believing. And, thereafter, having said such things as I might, though few they were, to comfort her, I bade her, gently, to sleep; and turned therewith to the Master Monstruwacan, who waited in quiet patience; and had no knowledge of that which I had heard and sent; for his hearing was but the normal; though his brain and heart were such as made me to love him.

And I told the Master Monstruwacan many things as

I put my clothing about me; how that there had indeed been the calling of the Master-Word; but not by any of that Lesser Redoubt; but that, to my belief, it had come from nigh about the Great Pyramid. Moreover, it was sent by no instrument; as I wotted that he did guess; but, as it seemed to me, by the brain-elements of many, calling in unison.

And all this did I set out to the Master Monstruwacan; and with something uncertain of fear and trouble in my heart; yet with a blind expectation; as, indeed, who would not. Though, no longer was I shaken by that first thought of Her nearness.

And I said to the Master Monstruwacan that we should go to the Tower of Observation, and search the Night Lands with the great spy-glass.

And we did this, and lo! presently, we saw a great number of men pass over the Electric Circle that went about the Pyramid; yet they came not *to* us; but went outwards towards the blackness and the strange fires and hideous mysteries of the Night Land. And we ceased from spying, and looked swiftly at one another, and knew in our hearts that some had left the Mighty Pyramid in the Sleep-Time.

Then the Master Monstruwacan sent word to the Master Watchman that his wardership had been outraged, and that people left the great Pyramid in the Sleep-Time; for this was against the Law; and none ever went out into the Night Land, save the Full Watch were posted to the Great Door; and at a due time, when all were wakeful; for the Opening Of The Door was made known to all the Millions of the Great Redoubt; so that all might be aware; and know that no foolishness was done without their wotting.

Moreover, ere any had power to leave the Pyramid, they must pass The Examination, and Be Prepared; and some of this have I set out already. And so stern was the framing of the Law, that there were yet the metal pegs upon the inner side of the Great Gate, where had been stretched the skin of one who disobeyed; and was flayed and his hide set there to be a warning in the Early Days. Yet the tradition was remembered; for, as I might say it, we lived very close about the place;

and Memory had no room whereby she might escape.

Now the Master Watchman, when he heard that which the Master Monstruwacan had to tell, went hastily with some of the Central Watch from the Watch-Dome, to the Great Gate; and he found the men of the Sleep-Time Watch, with the Warder of the Gate, all bound, and stopt in the mouth, so that none could make outcry.

And he freed them, and learned that nigh five hundred young men, from the Upper Cities, by the bigness of their chests, had come upon them suddenly, and bound them, and escaped into the night through the Eye-Gate in the top of the Great Gate.

And the Master Watchman was angry, and demanded why that none had called by the instruments of the Watch House; but lo! some had made to call thus, and found them unable to wake the recorders which lay in the central Watch-Dome; for there had been tampering.

Now, presently, through all the cities of the Great Redoubt, the news had gone how that five hundred foolish Youths had adventured out into the despair of the Night Land; and the whole Pyramid waked to life, and the Peoples of the South came to the Northern sides, for the Great Gate lay in the North-West side; and the Youths had made from there, not straightly outwards, but towards the North; and so were to be seen from the North-East embrasures, and from those within the North-West wall.

Thrice in those three days of journeying to the Northward, did the Youths sleep, and we perceived that some kept a watch, and so knew that there was a kind of order and leadership among them; also, they had each his weapon upon his hip, and this gave to us a further plea to hope.

Now, the Youths made, as I have told, to the Northward; but had first to keep a long way to the North-East, that they might come clear of the Vale of Red Fire. And this wise they journeyed, and kept the Vale about seven miles to the North-West of them, and so were presently beyond the Watcher of the North-East, and going with a greater freedom, and having less care to hide.

And this way, it may be, certain of the giants, wandering, perceived them, and went swiftly to make attack and destroy them. But some order went about among the youths, and they made a long line, with a certain space between each, because of the terror of their weapon, and immediately, it seemed, the Giants were upon them, a score and seven they were, and seeming to be haired like to mighty crabs, as I saw with the Great Spy-Glass, when the great flares of far and mighty fires threw their fierce light across the Dark Lands.

And there was a very great and horrid fight; for the Youths broke into circles about each of the Giants, and many of those young men were torn in pieces; but they smote the Monsters from behind and upon every side, and we of the Mighty Pyramid could behold at times the grey, strange gleam of their weapons; and the æther was stirred about me by the passing of those that died; yet, by reason of the great miles, their screams came not to us, neither heard we the roars of the Monsters; but into our hearts, even from that great distance and safety, there stole the terror of those awesome Brutes; and in the Great Spy-Glass I could behold the great joints and limbs and e'en, I thought, the foul sweat of them; and their size and brutishness was like to that of odd and monstrous animals of the olden world; yet part human. And it must be borne to mind that the Fathers and the Mothers of those Youths beheld all this dread fight from the embrasures, and their other kin likewise watched, and a very drear sight was it to their hearts and their human, natural feelings, and like to breed old age, ere its due.

Then, in a time, the fight ceased; for of those seven and twenty Giant Brutes there remained none; only that there cumbered the ground seven and twenty lumbering hillocks, dreadful and grim. For the lesser dead we could not see proper.

And we that were within the Pyramid saw the Youths sorted together by their leaders, all in the dim twilight of that place; and with the great Great Spy-Glass I made a rough count, and found that there lived of them, three hundred.

After this fight, the youths spent a time having a care

to their bodies and wounds ; and some were made separate from the others, and of these I counted upon fifty ; and whilst the others made to continue their march towards the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, these were constrained by one who was the Leader, to return to the Pyramid. And in a little, I saw that they came towards us, wearily and with many a halt, as that they suffered great wounds and harm of the fight.

But those others (maybe two hundred and fifty Youths) went onwards into the Night Land ; and though we sorrowed at this thing ; yet was there come a huge pride into our hearts that those raw ones, who yesterday were but children, had so held themselves in the battle, and done a great deed that day. And I wot that whilst their mothers wept, easeless, their fathers' hearts swelled within them, and held somewhat of their Pain away from them for a time.

And all this while, those wounded Youths came slowly, and rested, and came on again, the better helping the worse ; and a great excitement and trouble there was in all the Mighty Pyramid, to learn which were they that came, and they that went, and who lay out there quietly among the slain.

And, later, I heard that there was a new matter forward in the Redoubt ; for ten thousand men had assembled to attend the Room of Preparation for the Short Preparation ; and by this we knew that those poor Youths who stumbled towards us through the dark, were presently to have help.

And through all that Sleep-Time, there went forward the Spiritual and the Physical Preparation of the ten thousand ; and upon the morrow they slept, whilst an hundred thousand made ready their arms.

And in this space time the two hundred and fifty Youths that went towards the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, had come very nigh thereto ; having gone very warily and with some slowness, because, as maybe, of the lesson of the Giants.

And to us in the Pyramid, the instruments made known constantly that Influence which was abroad, and which all those of the Tower of Observation thought to proceed from the House of Silence. Yet, nothing could we see

with the Great Spy-Glass, and so could come to no sure knowing; but only to fear and wonder.

And, presently, the Youths were upon the Great Road, and turned to the Northward. And beyond them, a great way, stood the House of Silence, upon a low hill at a certain distance to the right of the Road.

By now, they that were wounded had come to within, maybe, fifteen miles of the Great Redoubt; and the news went through all the Cities, that the ten thousand men that were Prepared, made to arm themselves, and I went down by the Tower Lift, and saw them come down by thousands from the Room of Preparation; and none might go nigh to them, or cause them to speak; for they were made Ready, and were, as it might be, holy.

Now, presently, the Word was sent to every City throughout the Great Redoubt—as was the Law—that the Great Gate should be opened; and each city sent its Master to form the Full Watch, as was the Law. And each went clad in grey armour, and carrying the Diskos. And the Full Watch numbered, two thousand; for there were also the Watchmen.

Then the lights in the Great Causeway were made dim; so that the opening of the Gate should cast no great glare from within into the Night Land, to tell the Watcher of the North-West, and all the Monsters, that certain humans went out from the Mighty Pyramid. But whether the vast and hidden Forces of Evil had knowledge, we knew not; and they who went must but chance it, remembering that they were Prepared, and had the Capsule.

And the ten thousand that were Prepared, went out through the Great Gateway, into the night; and the Full Watch stood back from them, and spoke no word, but saluted silently with the Diskos; and they that went, raised each the Diskos a little, and passed out into the dark.

Then the Great Gate was shut; and we made to wait and to watch, with trouble and expectation within our hearts. And at the embrasures many did comfort the women of those men.

And I went back, upwards by miles, until I came to

the Tower of Observation; and I looked out from there into the Night Land, and saw that the ten thousand halted at the Circle, and made arrangement of themselves, and sent some before and upon either hand, and so went forward into the Night Land.

And after that, I went to the Great Spy-Glass, and turned it towards the two hundred and fifty Youths that were far off, upon the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk; yet for awhile I could not perceive them, for all the Road seemed empty. But afterward I saw them, and they were clambering back into the Road, having gone aside as I thought, because of the passing of one of those Silent Ones, that I saw now at a distance to the Southward of them.

There passed then, some three hours; and in that time I varied my watching between those far-off Youths, and the Ten-thousand that went forward to succour the wounded, that were now, maybe, scarce nine miles distant from the Mighty Pyramid, and the Ten-thousand came very close to them. And, in truth, in a little while, they spied one the other, and I gathered, in spirit, something of the rejoicing of those youths; yet weak and troubled were they, because of their wounds, and their knowledge of failure, and their disobedience of the Law.

And, presently, they were surrounded by the Ten-thousand, and carried upon slings; and all that body swung round towards the Pyramid, and came back at a great pace.

And, in the same time, I heard the sound that made them so swift to hasten; for there smote up through the night the Baying of the Hounds; and we knew that they were discovered. And I swept the Great Spy-Glass over the Land, towards the Valley Of The Hounds, that I might discover them quickly; and I saw them come lumbering, at a strange gallop, and great as horses, and it might be only ten miles to the East.

Then, looking with the Great Spy-Glass, I saw that there moved across the Land, from the direction of the Plain of Blue Fire, a mighty Hump, seeming of Black Mist, and came with prodigious swiftness. And I called to the Master Monstruwacan, that he come and look

through one of the eye-pieces that were about the Great Spy-Glass ; and he came quickly, and when he had looked a while, he called to the Monstruwacan that had made report. And the Monstruwacan answered, and replied that the Influence drew nearer, by the reading of the instrument ; yet of the thing itself the man had no sight.

And my heart stood quiet with fear, and the utter terror of this Monster, which I knew to be surely one of the Great Forces of Evil of that Land, and had power, without doubt, to destroy the spirit. And the Master Monstruwacan leapt towards the Home-Call, and sent the great Sound down to the Ten-thousand, that they might attend, and immediately, he signalled to them to Beware. Yet, already I perceived that they knew of this Utter Danger that was upon them ; for I saw them slay the Youths quickly, that their spirits might not be lost ; for they were Unprepared. But the men, being Prepared, had the Capsule, and would die swiftly in the last moment.

And the men came swiftly towards the Mighty Pyramid. Yet, ere they were come to safety, the Baying of the Hounds sounded close upon them, and they faced to the danger ; yet, as I could know, without despair, because that they yet lived after so enormous a peril.

Yet, the Ten-thousand ceased not to smite with the Diskos ; and they hewed the Hounds in pieces ; but of the men that went forth, there were a thousand and seven hundred slain by the Hounds, ere the men won to victory.

Then came that wearied band of heroes back to the home shelter of the Vast Redoubt ; and they bore their dead with them, and the Youths that they slew. And they were received with great honour, and with exceeding grief, and in a great silence ; for the thing admitted not of words, until a time had passed. And in the cities of the Pyramid there was mourning ; for there had been no sorrow like unto this through, mayhap, an hundred thousand years.

Now there was presently, in the Garden of Silence, which was the lowermost of all the Underground Fields, the Ending of those seventeen hundred heroes, and of

the Youths that they saved and slew. And the Garden was a great country, and an hundred miles every way, and the roof thereof was three great miles above, and shaped to a mighty dome ; as it had been that the Builders and Makers thereof did remember in their spirits the visible sky of this our present age.

And the making of that Country was all set out in a single History of seven thousand and seventy Volumes. And there were likewise seven thousand and seventy years spent to the making of that Country ; so that there had unremembered generations lived and laboured and died, and seen not the end of their labour. And Love had shaped it and hallowed it ; so that of all the wonders of the world, there has been none that shall ever come anigh to that Country of Silence—an hundred miles every way of Silence to the Dead.

And in the midst of that silent Country, there was a great hill, and upon the hill a vast Dome. And the Dome was full of a Light that might be seen in all that Country, which was the Garden of Silence. And beneath the Dome was the " Crack," and within it the glory of the Earth-Current, from which all had life and light and safety. And in the Dome, at the North, there was a gateway ; and a narrow road went upward to the gateway ; and the Road was named The Last Road ; and the Gateway was named by no name, but known to all as The Gateway.

And it was here, into the Country of Silence, that they brought down the Dead to their Burial. And there came down into the Country of Silence, maybe an Hundred Million, out of the Cities of the Pyramid, to be present, and to do Honour.

Now they that had charge of the Dead, did lay them upon the road which ran up unto The Gateway, even that same road which was named The Last Road. And the Road moved upwards slowly with the Dead ; and the Dead went inward through The Gateway ; first the poor Youths, and afterward they that had given up life that they might save them.

And as the Dead went upwards, there was a very great Silence over all the miles of the Country of Silence. But

in a little while there came from afar off, a sound as of a wind wailing; and it came onwards out of the distance, and passed over the Hills of the Babes, which were a great way off. And so came anigh to the place where I stood. Even as the blowing of a sorrowful wind did it come; and I knew that all the great multitudes did sing quietly; and the singing passed onwards, and left behind it an utter silence; even as the wind doth rustle the corn, and pass onwards, and all fall to a greater seeming quietness than before. And the Dead passed inward through The Gateway, into the great light and silence of the Dome; and came out no more.

And afterwards the People did wander over that Country of Silence, and made visit and honour to their Ancestors, if such were deserving.

And presently, the mighty lifts did raise them all to the Cities of the Pyramid; and thereafter there was something more of usualness; save that ever the embrasures were full of those that watched the Youths afar upon the Great Road. And in this place I to remember how that our spy-glasses had surely some power of the Earth-Current to make greater the impulse of the light upon the eye. And they were like no spy-glass that ever you did see; but oddly shaped and to touch both the forehead and the eyes; and gave wonderful sight of the Land. But the Great Spy-Glass to be beyond all this; for it had the Eyes of it upon every side of The Mighty Pyramid, and did be truly an Huge Machine.

And to me, as I went about my duties, or peered forth through the Great Spy-Glass at the Youths upon the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, there came at times a far faint thrilling of the æther; so that sometimes I was aware that there was the beating of the Master-Word in the night; but so strange and weak, that the Instruments had no wotting of it. And when this came, then would I call back through all the everlasting night to Naani, who was indeed Mirdath; and I would send the Master-Word with my brain-elements; and afterwards such comfort as I might.

Yet hard and bitter was the truth of my helplessness

and weakness, and the utter terror and might of the Evil Forces and Monsters of the Night Land. So that I was like to have brake my heart with pondering.

And the silence would come again; and anon the weak thrilling of the æther; but no more the far voice speaking in my soul.

CHAPTER V

INTO THE NIGHT LAND

Now, after that destruction which had come upon the Ten-thousand, and the fresh assurance that was upon us of the terror of the Night Land, it may be known that there could be no more thought to succour. Though, in truth, those Youths that went now upon the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk were far beyond our aid.

And here will I tell how that the strange Quiet which did fill all the Land, seeming to brood within the night, was horrid beyond all the roarings which had passed over the darkness in the time that went before; so that it had given my spirit some rest and assurance to hear but the far-echoing, low thunder of the Great Laughter, or the whining which was used at times to sound in the night from the South-East, where were the Silver-fire Holes that opened before the Thing that Nods. Or the Baying of the Hounds, or the Roaring of the Giants, or any of those dreadful sounds that did often pass through the night. For they could not have offended me as did that time of silence; and so shall you judge how dreadful was that quiet, which did hold so much of horror.

And surely it will be known that none had thinkings now, even in idle speech, that any should have power to succour the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt. Neither, as I have said, had any the knowledge of the place where it did stand.

Now, as may be conceived, this *sure knowledge* that we might give no succour to the People of the Lesser Redoubt, weighed heavy upon my heart; for I had,

maybe with foolishness, held vague hopes and wonders concerning our power to make expedition secretly into the Night, to discover that Lesser Pyramid, and rescue those poor thousands; and above all, as may be thought, had I the thought of that sweet moment in which I should step forward out of the night and all mystery and terror, and put forth mine arms to Naani, saying: "I am That One." And knowing, in my soul, that she that had been mine in that bygone Eternity, should surely know me upon the instant; and call out swiftly, and come swiftly; and be again unto me in that age, even as she had been in this.

And to think upon it, and to know that this thing should never be; but that, even in that moment of thought, she that had been mine in these olden days of sweetness, might be even then suffering horror in the Power of some foul Monster, was like a kind of madness; so that nearly I could seize the Diskos, and run forth unprepared into the evil and terror of the Night Land, that I should make one attempt to come to that Place where she abode, or else to cast off my life in the attempt.

And oft did I call to Naani; and always I sent the Master-Word beating through the night, that she might have assurance that it was indeed I that did speak unto her spirit, and no foul thing or Monster, spelling evil and lies unto her.

And oft did I make to instruct her that never should she be tempted forth from the shelter of that Redoubt in which she did live, by any message out of the night; but always to await the Master-Word; and, moreover, to have a sure knowledge that none that was her Friend would ever seek to entice her into the night.

Yet, day by day, did my heart grow more weary and restless; for, indeed, it did seem that life was but a very little matter, against so great a loss as my heart did feel to suffer.

Now, concerning my love-trouble, there did happen a certain thing which gave me to decide; for one night I waked from a sore troubled sleep, and it did seem that Naani did call my name, mine olden love name, and in a voice of utter anguish and with beseeching. And I

sat up in the bed, and sent the Master-Word into the Night, with my brain-elements; and presently all about me there was the solemn beat of the Master-Word, answering; but weak, and gone faint, that scarce I might hear it.

Yet, though I did call many a time unto the everlasting night, there came no more the voice of Naani, speaking strangely within my spirit; but only at times a weak thrilling of the æther about me.

And, at the last I grew maddened with the sorrow of this thing, and the sense and knowledge of harm about the maid; and I stood upright upon my feet, and I raised my hands, and gave word and honour unto Naani through all the blackness of the night, that I would no more abide within the Mighty Pyramid to my safety, whilst she, that had been mine Own through Eternity, came to horror and destruction by the Beasts and Evil Powers of that Dark World. And I gave the word with my brain-elements, and bade her to be of heart; for that until I died I would seek her. But out of the Darkness there came naught but the silence.

Then I clothed me swiftly, and went up quickly to the Tower of Observation, that I might speak instant with the Master Monstruwacan; for my heart burned in me to intention, and to be doing speedily that which I had set upon myself to do.

And I came to the Master Monstruwacan, and told all to him; and how that I did mean no more to suffer in quiet and to no end; but to make adventure into the Night Land, that I find Naani, or perchance find a swift peace from this my long troubling.

Now, when the Master Monstruwacan heard that which I had to say, it sat heavily upon him, and he besought me long and many times that I refrain from this thing; for that none might achieve so great a task; but that I should be lost in my Youth before many days were gone by. Yet to all his speech I said not, save that this thing was laid upon me, and even as I had promised, so should I make to act.

And in the ending, the Master Monstruwacan perceived that I was set to this thing, and not to be moved; and he did put it to me how that I had grown to leanness,

with so much troubling, and that I should have wisdom to wait awhile, that I put on my full strength.

But even as I was, so would I go; and this I told to him, gently; and showed how that the thing was meet and helpful to the safety of my soul; for that my strength was still in me; yet was I sweeter in spirit because that I stood lean and pure, and much poor dross and littleness had been burned from me; so that fear was not in me. And all do I lay to the count of my love, which doth purify and make sweet and fearless the human heart.

Now, when the morrow came, if thus I shall speak of that which was outwardly even as the night, though changing alway within the Mighty Pyramid, I went unto the Room of Preparation; and the Door was closed upon me; and I underwent the Full Preparation; that I might have full power and aid to come to success through all the terror of the Night Land.

And three days and three nights did I abide within the Room of Preparation; and upon the fourth day was mine armour brought unto me; and the Master of the Preparation stood away from me, silent and with sorrow upon his face; but touching me not, neither coming anigh to aid me; nor having any speech with me; for none might crowd upon me, or cause me to answer.

And, presently, was I clad with the grey armour; and below the armour a close-knit suit of special shaping and texture, to have the shape of the armour, and that I might not die by the cold of the Night Land. And I placed upon me a scrip of food and drink, that might keep the life within me for a great time, by reason of its preparation; and this lay ready to me, with the armour, and was stitched about with the Mark of Honour; so that I knew loving women thus to speed me.

And when all was done and made ready, I took up the Diskos, and bowed in silence to the Master of the Preparation; and he went towards the door, and opened it; and signalled that the People stand back; so that I might go forth untouched. And the People stood back; for many had crowded to the door of the Room of Preparation, so that I knew how that my story must be to the heart of all, in all the Cities of the Great Redoubt;

for to come unbidden anigh that Door was against the Lesser Law, and that any erred in this matter, betokened much.

And I went out through the Door; and there was a mighty lane of people unto the Great Lift. And about the Great Lift, as I went downwards, did the countless millions stand; and all in a great silence; but having dear sympathy in their souls; yet loyal unto my safety, in that none in all the Mighty Pyramid did make speech unto me, or call out aught. And as I went downward through the miles, lo! all the æther of the world seemed to be surged with the silent prayers and speedings of those quiet multitudes.

And I came at last unto the Great Gate; and behold the dear Master Monstruwacan did stand in full armour, and with the Diskos, to do me honour, with the Full Watch, as I went forth. And I looked at him, quietly, and he looked unto me, and I bent my head to show respect; and he made silent salute with the Diskos; and afterwards I went onwards towards the Great Gateway.

And they made dim the lights in the Great Causeway, that there should no glare go forth into the Land, when the Gate was opened; and behold, they opened not the lesser gate within the greater, for me; but did honour my journey, in that they swung wide the Great Gate itself, through which a monstrous army might pass. And there was an utter silence all about the Gate; and in the hushed light the two thousand that made the Full Watch, held up each the Diskos, silently, to make salute; and humbly, I held up the Diskos reversed, and went forward into the Dark.

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Now I went forward for a space, and took heed not to look backwards; but to be strong of heart and spirit; for that which did lie before me had need of all my manhood and courage of soul, that I come to the succour of that Maid afar in the darkness of the World, or meet my death proper, as it might need to be.

And my heart was warm towards the Master Monstruwacan for that great honour, that he should come down-

ward in armour to make one with the Full Watch, that he might uphold me to a lofty spirit at the moment of my going.

And all that time as I went forward, was the æther of the night about me, in tumult with the thoughts and blind wishings of the great millions I had but now left to my back.

And thus did I go forward, full of new thoughts and olden memories, and fresh-breaking wonders; neither forgetting something of doubts and fears more than a little. And again was it most cunning strange to be out there in the Night Land—though not yet afar,—where often had my fancies and imaginings led me; yet until that time never had I touched foot, in all that life, upon the outward earth. And this must be a wondrous quaint seeming thought to those of this present day.

And so came I, at last, nigh to the Circle that did go about the Redoubt; and presently I was come to it; and something astonished was I that it had no great bigness; for I had looked for this by *reasoning*; having always a mind to picture things as they might be truly, and hence coming sometimes to the wonder of a great truth; but odd whiles to errors that others had not made. And now, lo! I did find it but a small, clear tube that had not two inches of thickness; yet sent out a very bright and strong light, so that it seemed greater to the eye, did one but behold from a distance.

Now, at the beginning, I did walk outwards into the Night Land, somewhat blindly, and without sure direction; being intent only to put a good space to my back, that I might cure somewhat the ache which did weaken my heart at the first.

But, in awhile, I ceased somewhat from my overswiftness, and did put thought to my going. And I came quickly to reason that I should try a new way through the Land; for it might be that there was an over-watchfulness in that part which had been trod by the Youths.

And so did I make speed towards the North, having a strong surety in my heart and mind that there were but two ways to my search; for without of the Valley,

afar up in the dead lonesomeness of the hidden world, was a cold that was shapen ready to Death, and a lacking, as I must believe, of the sweet, needful air that yet did lie in plenty in that deep place of the earth. So that, surely, the mighty Valley somewheres to hold that other Redoubt.

CHAPTER VI

THE NIGHT LAND

Now, as I went towards the North and West, I steered me wearily for a great while, that I come safe of that Great Watcher of the North-West. And as I made forward, I put thought to all matters which must concern me; so far as I had imagining to see. And first I did consider the speed that I should keep; and found presently that I did well to be moderate; for that I had before me a great and mighty journey; and indeed, who might speak knowingly of the end thereof?

But when one-and-twenty hours had gone, I grew very weary and something faint; and was forced that I look about for some place where I might have rest. And, in a little while, I did see, away off, a small fire-hole, the like of which I had passed odd times even so early. And I made to come nigh to that part; for there would be warmth from the chill of the Night Land, and mayhaps a place dry and convenient to my slumber.

And when I came anigh, I saw that it was a cheerful place, as it might be said, amid so much gloom; for the hole was but a few paces wide, and full of a dull, glowing fire, that did bubble somewhat, and throw off a small sulphur-smoke. And I sat me down, at no great way, and did place the Diskos on the rock to my hand.

And I moved not, awhile; but was aweary, so that I had not the courage to eat, neither to drink; but must turn me and look back to the Mighty Pyramid; and, in truth, though I had come a very good space, yet was I so anigh to it, that I was both cheered and put out

of heart; for it did seem close upon me, by reason of its greatness, so that I, who had journeyed a hard and weariful way, was shaken with the greatness of the task that was upon me.

Yet was this but one side of my heart; for it was good to feel the nearness of my Mighty Home; and I knew that there did countless millions make watch upon me, as I sat; yet did I make no sign; for it is not meet to make a constant farewell; but to GO. Yet was it very strange to be thus near, and to show such behaviour as were proper to one afar from all humanity. But so it was that I ordered my ways; for it did seem proper to me; yet was I happy to know that the dear Master Monstruwacan must, time and oft, have spied upon me through the Great Spy-Glass; and mayhaps did watch me in that moment.

And it grew in me that I did act weakly to hold off from mine Vittles, and showed foolishness before my kind friend afar; and I did ope my scrip, and take therefrom three tablets, the which I chewed and did eat; for this was a strong food, treated that it had but small bulk. Yet were they not filling to the belly; and I made that I would drink well, that I might feel that something was therein.

And to this end, I shook from a strong and especial tube, a dust; and I caught the dust within a little cup; and the air did make an action upon that dust, as it were of chemistry; and the dust did boil and make a fizzing in the cup, and rose up and filled it with a liquid that was of simple water; yet very strange to see come that way; but ordinary after a time.

And in this way, as might be seen, had I such food and drink in but a little scrip, that might keep life within me for a great time. Yet was it a way of discomfort, and lacking to the mouth and to the belly; but a sufficient thing unto the need of the body, and good matter for a thankful heart, in that dark and hungry Land.

Now, when I had eaten, I did go over in their order, those things which I did carry; for there was, beside the Diskos and that scrip of food, a pouch that did contain matters various. And these, I did look into; and afterward did take out a small compass that I had been give

by the Master Monstruwacan, so that I might find of its workings without the Great Redoubt; and, he had said unto me, that it might be that I should pass far off into the Night Land, and lose the Mighty Pyramid amid so great a Country and so plentiful a Darkness. Then, perchance, if that ancient principle did still lurk within the machine, though turned no more to the North, but unto the Pyramid, then should it guide my feet Homeward out of the Everlasting Night, and thus have once more that ancient use which, as I do know, is common unto this age.

And this was a very cunning thing to have with me, if but it held service to the Earth-Current, and a rare thing, which the Master Monstruwacan did make with his own hands and much skill and pains, from an olden one that had place within the Great Museum.

And I set the thing upon the ground; but it had no certain way with it; but did spin and waver constantly; and this I made to consider, and remembered that I was yet above that part where, afar in the earth did spread the greatness of the Underground Fields; and I was, haply, but a little way off from the "Crack"; though a mighty way above.

And, presently, I did put by the compass in my pouch, and made to compose myself unto sleep. But here would I now set down how that, in the end, after I had gone many days' journeyings outward from the Mighty Pyramid, I did indeed find it to draw the Northward part of the needle unto it; and this was a comfort and a pleasure to my spirit; moreover, if ever I did get back, as I did think, it would be a matter for great interest unto the Master Monstruwacan; yet, in verity, were there other matters that should hold him more; for he was right human as all should know.

And now, I made to compose myself for sleep; and to this end, I took a cloak-matter which did cross my shoulder and hip, and wrapt it about me, and lay down there in the darkness of the Night, by that strange fire-hole.

And it was from a sweet and lovely sleeping, such as this, that I was waked suddenly by a great and mighty sound; and I came instant to a possessing of my senses;

and I knew that the mighty Voice of the Home-Call did go howling across the Night. And, swift and silent, I slid the cloak from about me, and took the haft of that wondrous Diskos into mine hand.

And I did look towards the Pyramid, quickly, for a message; for I had a sure knowledge that there had a great Need arisen, and that some Terror came towards me out of the Dark; else they had never waked all the Night Land to a knowing that an human was abroad out of the Mighty Refuge.

And then, afar upwards in the prodigious height, I did see the great, and bright and quick darting flashes of a strange green fire, and did know that they spelled to me in the Set-Speech a swift warning that a grey monster, that was a Great Grey Man, had made scent of me in the dark, and was even in that moment of time, crawling towards me through the low moss-bushes that lay off beyond the fire-hole to my back. And the message was sharp; and bade me to leap into the bushes unto my left; and to hide there; so that I might chance to take the thing to an advantage.

And, as may be thought, they had scarce flashed the tale unto me; but I was gone in among the shadows of a clump of the moss-bush that did grow anigh; and I sweat with a strange terror, and a cold and excited shaking of the heart; yet was my spirit set strong to conquer.

And lo! as I did crouch there, hidden, I saw something come very quiet out of the bushes that did grow beyond the fire-hole; and it was great, and crept, and was noways coloured but by greyness in all its parts.

And I leapt quick from that clump of the moss-bush, unto another, and crouched, and made a watch all about me; and kept the ears of my spirit open, knowing that the Master Monstruwacan did also watch all, for me.

And, suddenly, I saw a little moving of a bush that grew to the back of those bushes in which I had been hid; and there came out of the bush that moved, a great grey hand, and moved the moss of the clump where I had been, as it were that something peered out of the moving bush. And there followed the great grey head

of the Grey Man, and the head went into the clump of the moss-bush where I had been.

And I knew that I must strike now; and I leapt, and smote with the Diskos; and the thing fell upon its side, and the great grey legs came out of the hither bushes, and twitched and drew upwards; but the head remained in the bush where I had been hid. And I stood away from the thing whilst it died; and in mine hand the Diskos did spin and send forth fire; as it were that it did live, and did know that it had slain a great and horrid monster.

And I turned me then away, and went off into the night, going swift and cautious, and bearing the Diskos cunningly and almost, as it were, with a love for that strange and wondrous weapon that had so befriended me, and slain the foul Grey Man with one stroke. And I had a feeling that it did know me, and had a comradeship for me; and I doubt none will understand this; save, it might be, they of the olden days that did carry one strong sword always. Yet was the Diskos more than the sword; for it did in truth seem to live with the fire and the flame of the Earth-Current that did beat within it.

Now, presently, as I walked, I grew something faint, and had knowledge that I did foolishly; for, indeed, I should have eat after my fight; yet may I be forgiven for this forgetting, in that I had been much shaked and put about.

And I sat me down in a little clear place among the bushes, and did eat three of the tablets, and did once more shake forth the dust that did turn in the air to a natural water by a proper and natural chemistry of these matters. And after I had eat, I sat a little while, and did think, and did look upwards at the great slope of the Pyramid in the night; and all the time did I listen with mine ears and with my spirit; and kept the Diskos across my knees, and looked this way and that, very frequent; but nothing came anigh.

And I fell upon sleep, looking upward at that Final Light, where, as might be, the Master Monstruwacan did bend the Great Spy-Glass upon my lonesomeness, as I lay there upon the ledge.

And presently my spirit waked me there in the half

dark of the Night Land; and I looked swift about me, and upwards, and saw nothing to fear. Then did I peer at my dial; and made to discover that I had slept full over six quiet hours; and by this I knew the reason of mine awakening; for it was so great impressed upon me by mine inward sense and being. And this you shall understand, someways, who have thought, ere sleep, to wake to a certain time of the morning; and by understanding shall you believe and give me all your kind harking and human sympathy.

And I made to have a smartness of going, which is ever hard to the newly waked; and I eat two tablets, the while my belly did cry out for an wholesome and proper filling; but I drank some of the water, and so did ease somewhat of my hunger.

And I wondered whether in that moment the Master Monstruwacan did look down upon me, with the Great Spy-Glass. And afterwards I turned away swiftly, and went on into the Night Land; for it did always make me shaken with lonesomeness to look upon my Great Home. And so I did go forward with a strong and uncaring stride; but grew presently to quietness, and to have back the proper caution of my going. Yet had I not gone all foolishly; for I had taken the Diskos from my hip, ere this; so that I possessed it handily.

And you shall understand with me how that when, about the fourteenth hour of that day's travel, I did draw very nigh unto the monstrous Watcher of the North-West, it did seem so utter strange from this fresh aspect that I had been like to think that I did see a new Monster. For, in truth, when I did come at last to creep to within a mile of it, among the low moss-bushes, I was confounded that the mighty chin did come forward towards the Great Redoubt, even as the upward part of a vast cliff, which the sea doth make hollow about the bottom; for it did hang out into the air above the glare of the fire from the Red Pit, as it had been a thing of Rock, all scored and be-weathered, and dull red and seeming burned and blasted by reason of the bloody shine that beat upward from the deep of the Red Pit.

Now by this nearness, I was the more truly able to perceive how that the Bulk of the Watcher did rise up

into the Night, like a Hill; and the colour was mostly black, save and indeed where it did face to the red shine of the Pit; and concerning this I have done telling.

Now, presently, at the eighteenth hour of that day's travel, I ceased from my journeying, that I might eat and drink; and I did sit a little while, and looked back upon the strange and monstrous thing which I had come beyond. And the great humped back and vast shoulders of the Watching-Thing rose up into the night, black and cumbrous against the red shine of the Pit. And thus, as you shall think, had that Brute looked always unto the Mighty Pyramid, through Eternity, and did cease not from watching, and was steadfast and silent and alone; and none did understand.

And after I had eat, and drunk some of the water, I went onward for a full matter of six hours more; being minded to have no sleep until I had put a great way between me and the Watcher. And in this part of my journey did I come to The Place Where The Silent Ones Kill, as it was named in the Maps. And I observed a very wondrous caution, and went away from it a little, unto the North, where I did see at a distance the shinings of fire-holes; the which did promise me warmth through my slumber.

And I made a great circling about that place where the plain of the Silent Ones did come outward; and so did gain to the North-West; and was thence something the happier in my heart; and went easily, and oft upon my feet; yet making a strong watching to every side.

Now I walked for twelve hours, and in that time, did eat and drink twice; and made onward again very steadfast and happy that all did go so quiet with me; so that it was as if I had at last come to a part of the Land that was given over to quietness, and lacking of monsters.

And when I had looked a while unto the Mighty Pyramid, which was now truly a great way off; for I had walked so many weary hours; I turned me once more to my journeying. And here let me observe that I had gone very far; yet not so distant, as might be thought; for, oft, I did go less than one mile in an hour or maybe two hours, having to be of great caution, and

oft to hide, and to go upon my belly, or to crawl, all as might be. And, further, as you may have perceived I made not a straight forwardness; but did strike this way and that way, being very intent to escape the Monsters and Evil Forces that were all about.

Now, I had a believing that I had come out of the Country where did lurk those horrid Doorways in the Night; and I went not with so utter a weight upon my heart; and did feel that naught should come now upon the back of my neck, which had been an odd and troublesome fancy whilst that I did creep through that Country of Gloom. Yet, as you shall know, I went with no foolish confidence; but with a great caution, and mine hearing keen to hark, and a care to my steps, and did ever watch around me as I journeyed.

And because that I went forward in this proper and sedate manner, I had great cause for a thankful heart, as you may perceive; for I had come after a long way to another of those hollows where did burn one of the fire-holes; and I made a pause upon the edge of the hollow in which it did lie, and looked downward, keeping guarded within the moss-bushes, where they grew anigh to the top thereof. And, when I was come upon that far side of the fire-hole, lo! there was spread out in the yellow sand of that place, a Curious Thing; and I went more nigh, and stooped to look upon it; and behold it moved, and the sand all about did move for a great space; so that I gave back very swift, and swung upward with the Diskos.

And I saw that a Yellow Thing did hump upward from out of the sand, as it had been a low hillock that did live, and the sand shed downward from it, and it did gather to itself strange and horrid arms from the sand all about it. And it stretched two of the arms unto me; but I smote with the Diskos, and I smote thrice; and afterward they did wriggle upon the sand. But this was not the end, as I did hope; for the Yellow Thing arose, and ran at me, as it might be that you should see a spider run. And I did leap backward, this way and that; but the monster had a great swiftness; so that I did seem surely lost.

Then made I a strong and instant resolve; for I per-

ceived that I had no hope to slay this thing; save that I should come at it in the body. And I put everything to the chance, and made not to escape any more; but ran straight in among the legs; and there were great hairs like to spines upon the legs, and these had pricked me to the death, but that the armour saved me.

Now, I had done this thing with a wondrous quickness; so that I was under the mighty arching of the legs before the Yellow Thing did wot of my intent. And the body was bristled with the great hairs, and poison did seem to come from them, and to ooze from them strangely in great and shining drops. And the Monster heaved itself up to one side, that it might bring certain of the legs inward to grasp me; yet in that moment did I smite utter fierce with the Diskos—thrusting. And the Diskos did spin, and hum, and roar, and sent out a wondrous blaze of flame, as that it had been a devouring Death; and it sundered the body of the Yellow Thing and did seem as that it screamed to rage amid the entrails thereof; so wondrous was the fury and energy of that trusted Weapon.

And I was covered with the muck of the thing; and the claws upon the legs seized me, so that the grey armour did bend and crack to the might thereof, and I grew sick unto death with the pain within; but smote with the shining Diskos, using my left hand weakly; for my right was gript dreadful fast to my body. And lo! I was sudden free, and a great blow did knock me far across the hollow, so that I was like to have fallen into the fire-hole; but fell instead upon the edge, and came backward unto safety.

And I turned me about, and the Yellow Thing did throw the sand all ways, as it did die; but had lost power to come upon me. And for my part, I lay weak upon the earth, and was no more able to fight; nor could I do more than breathe for a great while; but yet came presently to health, and made to examine my hurts.

Then I saw there was no great wound anywhere upon me; but only an utter bruising; and I found upon my right leg that there was a sharp and hairy claw clipt about it; but the armour had saved me from harm of

the horrid thing; so that I did but kick it free with my left foot, and thence into the fire-hole.

And that day, I passed seven large fire-holes, and two that were small; and always I came softly unto them; for there were oft living things about the warmth. And at the sixth fire-hole, I did see that which I did think to be a great man, that did sit to the fire, with monstrous knees drawn upward unto his chin. And the nose was great and bent downward; and the eyes very large, and did shine with the light from the fire-hole, and moved, watching, always this way and that, so that the white parts did show, now this side and now that. But it was not properly a man.

And I went away very quiet from that place, and looked oft backward, until that I was sure of safety; for it was a very horrid Monster, and had that place to be for a Lair, as I did judge from the smell thereof.

And for two days I did make a safe coasting of the Plain of Blue Fire; and did keep well off, maybe two great miles, among the moss-bushes. And I made a very good speed through the darkness. And at the eighteenth hour of each journey, I made a place for my slumber; and the first I did manage under a thick bush; but the second was high upon the ledge of a rock that grew upward in the night amid the bushes. And, save that I was bitter cold, there did no harm come to me. And in all that time of journeying, I had no sight of the Mighty Pyramid; for the blind shining of the Plain of Blue Fire was ever between.

Then, it was in the sixteenth hour of the third day of my journey beside the Plain, that I did come out beyond the end of it, and had fresh sight of the Mighty Pyramid, afar in the night upon my Right. And I stopt there in a bare place among the moss-bushes, and did in a weak moment hold up the Diskos, so that I make a salute unto the Pyramid, Mine Home; for truly was I so utter glad to behold it once more.

And in a little while was I aware that there was a disturbance of the æther of the world all about me; so that it did seem that there had been one at the Great Spy-Glass to watch for my coming into their sight from behind the shining of the Plain of Blue Fire.

And it was like that news had gone downward through the Cities of the Great Redoubt; so that they did print the word of it in the Hour-Slips; and by this there would be many Millions thinking upon me, and a rushing unto the Embrasures, that they might spy out at me. Yet I doubt that any glass might perceive me surely at so great a space, save the power of the Great Spy-Glass in the Tower of Observation. But the Emotion of the Millions to reach to me.

And you shall know that it did seem homely and sweet unto me to hear all about me the shaking of the æther of the world, and to be ware that so many did think humanly upon me, and had prayers unto my safety.

And it was a strange thing to stand so utter far off in the Night, and to look back to that Everlasting Hill of Light, that was grown something small by the distance, and to have surety that I was lookt upon through the Great Spy-Glass, maybe by the kindly eye of my dear friend the Master Monstruwacan, and so keenly that he could, it might be, make almost to guess the look within mine eyes, as I did gaze backward unto that Mine Home.

Yet, though this dear and homely sympathy was a sweet and companionable thing to my heart, it came swift to my thought that I was in a sore danger, if that they ceased not quickly to think so onely upon me; for surely was I not come over-near unto that *dreadful* House of Silence; and well might so much Emotion of the Millions tell unto the Horrid Power that dwelt within, how that I was even anigh. And so shall you see the mixt feelings that came upon me everyway.

Yet, as it did chance, the æther was quieted in a little; for it did need *unity* of the Millions (being that they were untrained to their spiritual powers) to stir the æther. And so was I more easy of mind, and went forward again upon my way.

Now, as it did chance, at the eighteenth hour, I was come to a place where I heard a noise of water; and I went to my left, that I might come upon it; and there boiled a hot fountain that went up out of the rock of that place.

Then, as I did sit there beside that warm stream, with

my feet dabbled therein, I heard sudden, afar off, the voice of a mighty Night-Hound, baying in the night. And the sound came from the North-West of the Plain of Blue Fire.

And after that there had passed a little time, the while that I did listen very keen, lo! there burst out in the night, as it did seem scarce a mile off, the monstrous deep baying of the giant Hound. And I knew surely that the Brute did track me, and a sick and utter horror did fall upon me; so that I could scarce get my foot-gear upon me, once more. Yet, in truth, I was not long to the matter, and was to my feet, and did hold the Diskos ready; and very desperate I was to the heart; for it is ever a fearsome thing to be put in chase, and the worse an hundred times when there is a sure knowledge that a deathly Monster doth be the pursuer.

Now, I did stand there but a moment it did seem, to make an anxious considering how that I might best assure me some chance to live through this swift coming Danger. And then did I think upon the stream, to use it, and I leapt quick therein, and did run very strong down the middle part, which was nowheres so much as thigh-deep, and oft not above mine ankles. And as I did run, there came again the bellow of that dire Brute, following, and was now, as mine ears did say, scarce the half of a mile to my rear.

Then, in a moment, I did hear the Great Beast; for it bayed but a little way up the stream, as that it had overshot the place where the scent did end. And immediately, I sank swiftly into the water, which was there so deep as my knee, and turned upon my belly. And the water surged over my shoulders; for I kept my head above. And so I did look eager and fearful through the stream into the shadows and the half-darkness, towards where I did think to see the Night-Hound.

And in a moment I saw it coming; and it was a little vague, by reason of the smoke of the river; yet did seem black and monstrous in the gloom, and great as a mighty horse. And it went past me at a vast and lumbersome gallop; but I did not see it in that moment; for I dived my head down unto the rock of the river bottom,

and held downward, until that I was like to burst for sore longing of breath.

And as the great Night-Hound past me, it tore the earth and the bushes, with the exceeding strength that it put forth to run, and clods of the earth and stones of bigness were cast this way and that by the feet of the Hound, running. And so shall you have a little knowledge of the strength of that Beast.

And the Hound ran on into the distance, and presently, I heard it baying in the Night. Then I rose, and went onward, down the warm stream, and made a strong walking, yet keeping alway to the water; and oft did stop a little that I should listen; and always I heard the Night-Hound a great way off in the night, baying, and seeming that it did surely run to and fro, searching.

Then I came out of the water, and went forward, stooping and creeping, among the moss-bushes, going outward to the Westward of North, so that I should go away so quickly as I might from the nearness of the House.

And, in a while, I found the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, to bend inward at the North of the House of Silence; so that it came right horridly close unto the House; for here the hill on which the House did stand, was very abrupt and fell steeply unto the Road. And so was that Dreadful House stood up there above me in the Silence, as that it did seem to *brood* there upon the Land. And this side did seem truly as the other; and equal lone and dreadful.

And the House was monstrous and huge, and full of quiet lights; and it was truly as that there had been no Sound ever in that House through Eternity; but yet was it as that the heart did think each moment to see quiet and shrouded figures within, and yet never were they seen; and this I do but set down that I bring all home unto *your* hearts also, as that you crouched there with me in those low moss-bushes, there beside the Great Road, and did look upward unto that Monstrous House of Everlasting Silence, and did feel the utterness of silence to hang about it in the night; and to know in your spirits the quiet threat that lived silent there within.

And in the space of five hours was I clear of that House; and did have a greater ease about my heart; but yet was not free to come to food nor to slumber, the both of which I did sorely need; for I had slept neither eat for a weariful time, as you do know. But first I must go further off from the House, and afterwards come to some fire-hole, that I should dry myself and get warmth again into my body, which was bitter cold.

And presently, I spied outward to the West, as it did seem a good mile off in the night, the shining of a fire-hole; and I began to plan that I should come unto that place, and have warmth and dryness, and food and slumber. And, in verity, so set was I to the need of these matters that if there did be a Monstrous Thing nigh to the fire—as was so oft the case—then would I give battle unto it; for neither my Joy nor my labours did serve to put warmth into my body; and I must surely come anigh to fire, or die.

Then did I make no waste of time; but set off unto the fire-hole; and kept so much to shelter as I might; but was oft made to run over naked places, ere that I should come to more of the bushes.

And presently, when I had searched but a little while, I did find that a rock stood upward from a great clumping of the moss-bushes unto my left; and I went over to the rock, and made a search about it. And I found that there was a hole into the bottom part of the rock, and I thrust the Diskos into the hole, and made the blade to spin a little, so that it sent out a light; but there was no thing in the hole, and it did seem a dry and safe place for my sleep.

Then I turned me about, and went into the hole with my feet that way; and I found that it was so deep into the rock as the length of two men, and just so wide as I could lie in it without having it to pinch me. And there I made my bed in the hole, and went swift unto my sleep, and scarce had but a moment even to think upon Naani; and by this thing shall you know how utter was my weariness.

Now I waked of a sudden, and was very clear and refreshed. And I crept to the mouth of the hole, and

lookt out; but there was all a quietness round about, and nothing to threaten.

And I found that I had slept ten hours; so that I made a haste to eat and drink, that I should go forward swiftly upon my journey.

Now, after that I had journeyed twelve hours, I saw that I was come upon the commencement of a great and mighty slope, as that the world did slope downward always toward the North. And I went on again, after that I had eat and drunk, as I did likewise before this at the sixth hour of that day's journey.

And presently, I perceived the Road to cease; and surely this did confound me; as that a man of this age had come to a part where the world did end; for you shall know that the Road was that which had seemed to go on for ever; and you shall mind the way of my life up till that time, and so shall you the better conceive of my bewilderment, and as it were a feeling of great strangeness unto one that was overprest, as you would believe, with strange matters.

And I perceived surely that the time was come when I should make an utter parting from the Great Redoubt; and the thought came very heavy upon me. And in the same time I knew that the æther was stirred by the emotions of the Millions; so that I had knowledge they watched me with the Great Spy-Glass, and did send word down unto the Hour-Slips; and by this did the Millions know, and have a great thinking upon me in that moment.

Now, as I did stand there, looking downward into the Dark, and often backward unto the shining of the Final Light, and put to a horrid desolateness, behold! there came the low beating of the Master-Word in the Night. And it did appear as that it had been sent to give me courage and strength in that moment; and did seem unto my fancy that surely it did come upward unto me from out of the mighty blackness into which the Great Slope ran. Yet could this have been but a belief; for the æther doth have no regard unto direction to show you whence the spiritual sound doth come; and this did my knowledge and Reason know full well.

And I made that I would send back the Master-Word,

sending it with my brain-elements, and so give news unto Naani how that I did struggle to come unto her. Yet did I have caution in time; for in verity, had I sent the Master-Word, then had the Evil Forces of the Land wotted that I was out; and mayhaps had come swift unto my Destruction; and so did I contain my spirit and desire, and made to do wisely.

Yet was I put in courage by the low beat of the Master-Word; and did listen very keen, that some message should follow; but there came none, neither did the weak throb of the Word come about me again, at that time. And because that I was now grown more to my natural state, and did feel that I should indeed find the Maid, I looked once more unto the Great Pyramid, long and eager and with a solemn heart; yet with no sign or salutation, as I was before determined. And afterward, I turned and went downward into the dark.

* * * * * * *

Now I went downward very quiet and slow into that Darkness; and did make but a cautious way; for now you shall know me truly wrapped about with such a night as did seem to press upon my very soul, and such as you shall never have seen nor felt; so that I did seem lost even from my self, and did appear as that I went presently in unreal fashion, and did pass onward for ever and for ever through everlasting night; so that odd whiles I did made to walk with random, as that I stept no more upon this earth; but did go offwards into the Void.

And ever I did go downward; and by this only did I have a guide to my way. Yet, as you shall think, through reason of the utter dark I made scarce a mile in an hour or even two full hours; and so grew bitter by reason of mine unableness to go forward with a proper and free stride.

Now all that day, I did have a strange unease of the spirit, so that I stopt oft to listen, as that my soul told of something nigh unto me that did follow very quiet. Yet did mine ears perceive nothing; and so I alway to go downward again into the night that held the slope.

And here should I tell how that in the early part of the seventh hour, after I had eat and drunk, and went

forward as ever, upon my journey down the Mighty Slope, I did have a very sore tumble against a sharp rock; for I put my foot sudden into a small hole, and this did make me to pitch. And I was utter shaked by the fall and lay very quiet for a time; for the rock had surely ript my body, but for the armour.

And after that I was something renewed of strength and spirit, I made that I should go no more upon my feet, but upon my hands and knees; and thus should I feel the way that I went, and have a less need of the Diskos, which had not overmuch use to light my way, in that I shone it not often, and did guess more than I did perceive, as you may think.

And so I crept all that day, which was a bitter way of travel; yet had I done many a sore mile thus through the Night Land. And when that I had gone downward for eighteen hours, and eat and drunk thrice, I ceased from my labour, and did feel about in the darkness, that I come to a level place for my rest; and so did find presently, a place not so bad, and did push and cast away such small boulders as had been like to irk me.

And when I had been asleep scarce six hours, I waked again very sudden, as I had done before, and had belief that something did be anigh unto me; and I gript the Diskos, and did hearken; yet there was no sound that mine ears did wot of; neither aught that had power to be surely known of the spirit.

And all that day was as the day before; save that about the eighth hour I came near to fall into some monstrous pit in the Great Slope; but did only fall with my breast upon the edge, and so drew back, and presently did crawl all around it in the dark, and come safe unto the lower side; yet shaken and put more in trouble of spirit than before, and fearful how I should go; for I knew not whether I had come among such things, or whether I had but few to sorrow me.

Now by this time, I was gone downward ever for six great days; and I did seem as that I should presently come to the middle of the world; for of going downward there was no end.

And then, when it did be that I was near ready to believe this, I perceived far off in the deep of the night

a little shining that was yet weak and unsure. And I do not know whether I can truly give unto you the great astonishment and pain of hope that did come upon me; so that I grew sick in all my being but to behold once again the blessedness of light, and to have help unto my belief that I went not downward to an utter desolation.

Now, presently, I made a pause, and stood upward to my feet, so that I should the better perceive the light. And lo! as I did look toward it, I heard a far-away sound in the dark, as that something did set up a strange and monstrous piping in the night. And immediately, I went to mine hands and knees among the stones of the Slope, and kept myself low in the darkness, so that I should be the less plain to be seen, did any Monster approach.

And afar down the gorge, I did see the shinings of strange fires, faint and a great way off. And so was I come at last to the bottom of the Mighty Slope. Yet the gorge also to go downward, but not so great.

Now in all this time that I had walked in the great Gorge, I had past four of the far lights that I did see from the bottom of the Slope; and the two first and the fourth were blue, but the third was green; and all did dance and quake, and sent fitful shinings into the belly of the Gorge. And there came also from them whistlings, and from the second one a low and strange moaning noise; and I doubted not the gas did come oddly and with trouble. And I past these things with no great thought; for truly they were no matters for notice, after that which I had beheld.

Now, it was surely in the early Third of the seventh day of my journey down the Mighty Slope that I saw the first shining of the monstrous gas fountain; and from that time until now had there past maybe sixteen hours.

And I ceased me from wandering, and lookt about that I should come to a safe and proper place for my slumber; and this I saw very quick; for there was dry stone and rock everywhere, and no failing of holes and diverse places to my purpose; so that I was soon in a little cave between two mighty boulders.

And presently I slept, having my gear about me as

ever, and the Diskos to my breast. And as I went into slumber, I thought sweetly upon Naani, as I had done, indeed, an hundred times since I was come to the hopefulness of the lights of the Gorge.

And in six hours did I wake, as I did strive alway to set myself to do; yet was I very heavy and slow for a little, until that I was more properly come to wakefulness. And surely, as I did think before, this was like to be put upon me by the weighty air of the place; but yet it might be that the gas which did float in the Gorge was upon my lungs. And also, as you have perceived, if but you have attended my way, the air was grown warm, and oft were the rocks pleasant to the seat, and all of these matters did contrive to make me slumbrous.

Now, presently, the gas fires did cease utterly in the Gorge, and I lookt downward, along that great place, and saw only a greyness, but above the greyness there was, as it did seem, something of a vague and ruddy shining in the night. And this did wake me to wonder what new thing lay before; so that I grew more eager among the boulders.

And, later, when I had eat at the sixth and the twelfth hours, and gone on awhile, I came to a place where the Gorge made a quick turning unto my left, and at the end of the turning was a red and glowing light that was very great and wonderful; so that I was utter keen to come to that place, that I should discover what made the shining. And the place where I was come then, was very dark, because that I was nigh under the mighty wall of the mountain of the right side of the Gorge. Yet above, as it did seem to me, there was a far red upward glowing in the night.

Then did I go forward very fast, and presently, in a good while, I discovered that I drew near to a second great turning, that went to the right. And about the seventeenth hour, I came nigh unto the second great turning. And here did I put caution upon me, and crept for a while among the dark rocks of that place, that I should come to a sight of that which made the monstrous red shining.

And presently, I was beyond the corner of the mountain, and did look downward into a mighty Country

of Seas, and the burning of great volcanoes. And the volcanoes did seem as that they burned in the Seas. And the country was full of a great ruddy light from the volcanoes. And so shall you perceive me there among the rocks that did all stand upward strange and bold and silent in the red and monstrous glare of the light. And I, as it did seem, the one thing of life in all that desolation and eternity of rock and stone, there in the end part of the great Gorge.

And I peered forth into the wonder of the light; and was full of thrillings and fancies that I was surely come to the place where the Lesser Redoubt had been builded. And immediately I knew that this was not so; for surely had not Naani told how that they were in a land of darkness. And if this did be so, truly, how wondrous and dread a way had I yet to go, if that this Country of Seas and mighty volcanoes stood between.

Surely, it did seem to me then as that I must wander searching unto the world's end. And so shall you be company unto me there with my trouble and my thoughts, and the immediate wonder and strange glory of that mighty Country.

CHAPTER VII

THE DARK PYRAMID

Now in two hours more I was come clear down out of the Gorge, and stood in that Country; and for all that I did feel fresh troubled and bewildered, yet was I rejoiceful, as you may believe, in the surprising light and splendour of that sudden Land.

And before that I had come down out of the great Gorge, I had stood high within the mouth thereof, and lookt well out over the mighty Country. And I had counted seven and twenty great volcanoes, and this doth not take heed of two monstrous ranges of fire-hills that burned afar off, something unto my right. Neither doth it take account of an hundred thousand lesser places of fire.

And truly it did seem a very land of fire and water. For there was a small fire-hill stood within a sea, as it did seem no more than a little mile from that place where I did stand. And maybe a score to the back of it, spread all about. And here shall I do proper to tell concerning the seas. For there were of these, that I did count at that time, three that were small, and a mighty sea that went onward for ever into the red light of the fire-hills, so that it was gone utterly out of my sight, and did show no ending.

And to my right there was always sea and sea and the red blazing of the fire-hills; but unto my left, there were mighty forests, and there rose upward here and in that place, as that they were beyond the great woods, monstrous fire-hills. And so do you take from me some-

thing of that first impressing upon my brain and sense.

Now all that day I went forward at a great pace; and the nameless woods were unto my left, and the shores of the seas unto my right. And oft did I find that the trees grew even into the water, so that oft did I go forward among the trees, and a very wonderful thing, was this to me, that never had known before in all my life, until I was come into that Country, how that a glad and wild mystery doth live among forest trees. For there was no such strange wildness among the groves of the Underground Fields; though a solemn beauty in plenty. And the scent of the woods was sweet unto my spirit, as you shall wot.

Now all the time that I did go, there was the shore unto my right; but alway to my left, and around me oft-times as I did say, the great forests.

And in that one day I past thirty and seven boiling springs; but whether they boiled truly, I do have no knowledge; only that they sent out a great steam oft-times; and some did make a strong roaring noise; so that to hear them afar off in the forests was to think odd times that some wild beast roared strangely.

Now, when the eighteenth hour was come, I sat me down, as I had done upon the sixth and the twelfth hours, and eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, which here did fizz very rich and quick.

And afterward I lay down to my slumber, for I was greatly wearied. And I had chosen a place against a great rock, which was so that no creature might come upon me from behind. And I came easy upon sleep; but yet I did fix it upon me that I slumber only with the body; for I did know, by the shining of the eyes in the darksome woods, that strange creatures abode in the mighty forests.

And ere I was gone over to sleep, I thought upon Naani, as I had done much all that day, as though her spirit did hover near unto mine, and did strive pitiful to speak with me. And this I set out to you, that you shall know how it did seem unto me in my thoughts and fancyings. And as I lay there, I put a blessing upon her, and a determination into my heart that I make a more desperate speed of my going, if that might be; so that I come the

sooner to that strange, and unknown place in the dead world where did stand the lesser Refuge. And I was then asleep in a moment.

And lo! sudden I was awake. And lovely was the brightness of that Country, that did show me in a moment my danger, and did not keep me suspend in fearful Doubt, as did the grey darkness and strange shadows and lights of the Night Land. For I saw, on the instant that I got me to mine elbow, how that certain things did crouch within the borders of the trees, no more than a score paces off. And I perceived in a moment that my spirit had been given knowledge, and had wakened me. And I stared, the while that I did grip the Diskos; and I saw that there were six squat men that were humpt at the neck and shoulder; and they did crouch all there in a row, and were something hid by the shadows; and I perceived that they watched me; and the eyes of the men did shine like the eyes of beasts; and so shall you know somewhat of the strange terror that came upon me. Yet had I the Diskos and mine armour; and though my heart did shake a little, yet was my spirit assured to conquer.

Now I gat me to my feet, and had the Diskos ready within my hand; and behold! I could not see the Humped Men, for they were gone from that place; yet never did I see them go, though I had kept my gaze very steadfast upon that part where they did hide. And, as you shall understand, I was near ready to believe that there had been nothing there within the border of the wood; yet truly I knew that the men with the humps had been there, as I had seen.

And all that day, through thirty great hours did I go forward, at that stride, and did always watch; and at every sixth hour, I eat two of the tablets and drank a little of the water, and went onward again.

And lo! about the end of the thirtieth hour, I perceived that there was water ahead, besides the water of the sea that was ever to my right. And I thought, maybe, that the sea did go inward at that part of the land; but it was otherwise; for when I was gotten to that place, I found that a river came into the sea, and did come out of all the country that lay unto my left.

And in the mouth of this river, there was a small island; and surely I did look across to the island, and think it a refuge from the Humped Men that did surely play dog upon my going. Yet, truly, this was but an idle thought, and my need was that I should come to some way to cross over the river, that I go forward beside the great sea, which did stretch onward, as it did seem for ever, before me upon the far side.

And I knew not how to go across; for I had no power to swim, and had I swum, there were surely monsters in that great and warm-flowing river, as you shall believe.

And I went upward of the river-bank, that I might come to some place where the river did narrow; and surely I had been like to walk a mighty distance to this purpose, but that I came soon to a second river that did enter the first, not a mile above the shore of the sea; so that, as you do perceive, there was the sea to one side of me, and this second river unto the other, and the first river before me; and thus was I sorely perplexed, as any had been truly that was in a like trouble.

Yet, as it did chance, the need to go forward, and the danger of the Humped Men, put wit into me, so that I lookt about for a tree that was fallen. And there were many, yet great, so that I was much wearied and something strained of the spirit, before that I gat two little trees unto the water.

Now, when this was done, I made me a rough pole of a young tree-plant; and afterward, I lashed the two trees together with my belts and straps, and so had somewhat of a raft.

And so I did push off with the pole, and I pusht and paddled maybe the half of an hour, for, indeed it was all a clumsy contriving, and mayhap I the more so in my labours. Yet, presently, I was come so far over, that I drew nigh to the island; and it did seem a wise and proper thing that I should have my slumber there, and afterward go onward to the farther shore. And this I did; and after that I had eat and drunk, as ever, I lay down to sleep.

And by this time it was three and thirty hours since last I did slumber; so that I was bitterly awearied.

And I had a great and restful sleep; for, truly, the

island did seem a very safe place; and, in verity, I came to no harm, though I was as a dead man for nine great hours; and so shall you perceive my weariness.

And when I was come proper awake, I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water; and afterward made an end of my voyage, and then did take back my belts and straps from binding the trees, and so forward again upon my way, and no more fearful of the Humped Men; for, surely, I did think I had left them all upon the far shore of the river; though afterward I minded me that they might grow likewise upon the two sides; but yet was I only discovered by those upon the one, as you do know.

Now I had eat, as ever, at the sixth and the twelfth hours; and by that the eighteenth hour was come, I was nigh again unto a forest, that came down to the shore that went alway upon my right.

And surely, I lookt this way and that way, constant, and did see no place proper to my slumber. But afterward, I considered I did be a fool, to lack such; for truly the trees were plentiful, and I could climb a great one, and strap my body safe, and so have a sure bed for my rest. And I did this thing, and went upward into a great tree, and did tie my body to the tree, with my belts; yet I eat and drank before that I went up the tree.

Now when I was fast upward in the tree, and had made a bed upon a monstrous branch, and had the Diskos ready upon my hip, so that it should not fall but be nigh to my hand, I lay a little while thinking upon Naani; and I went not over to sleep immediately, which was strange; yet mayhaps because that my bed was so uncertain.

And I considered very gravely how that it was a monstrous long while since that I did hear the Master-Word from the dear Maid; and truly I was come a dreadful way from mine home, which was the Mighty Pyramid; for I had gone onward for ever through five and twenty great days of travel, and was not yet come to any place that did appear like to be that place where the Maid did abide.

Then a little time did pass in which I did wake and

sleep, and wake and sleep, a little; but with no surety of sleep; but as that I was very tired of the heart, and did but lie too wearied to come properly to sleep.

Now, presently, I had ceased from these vague thinkings and half dreamings, and was gone truly to sleep. Yet, nowise did I sleep very strong; but did seem to come anigh to wakefulness, this time and that. And, as it did chance, this was mayhaps a very good thing for my life; for I did presently come awake more surely, and did turn on the great branch; for there was a noise in the air, that was not the noise of the great fire-hill.

And the noise did grow, very heavy and lumbersome. And, in a moment, there came seven Humped Men, running among the trees, as that some monstrous thing did pursue. And immediately they were beneath the tree in which I did lie; so that a great fear came upon me, and I loosed the belt from the branch, that I should be free to fight.

And, directly upon this, I saw that the men did leap upward into the tree, beneath me; but not as that they did wot of me or make to come at me; but as that they did pay a great heed to some creature or happening that was far off among the trees. And surely, the noise did seem to come from that part, and did grow loud and mighty, and the Humped Men did all crouch very silent, and did make no noise or motion one to the other; but were quiet upon the lower branches.

And, as I did look now more to my ease, I perceived that they had each a great stone, and bloody, that did seem as that it were split to a certain sharpness, even as a stone doth break very natural. And they carried the stone under this arm or under that arm, so that they had their hands free to all matters.

And, alway the noise did come the more anigh, and I saw that a Humped Man did come running from among the trees, and did run beneath that place where the seven Humped Men did be on the branches. But they made no sign to the man, to save him; yet truly it was very plain that some monster pursued the man.

And immediately I saw how this thing was; for the Humped Man upon the ground, did not run so fast as might be; and I conceived that he did act to make some

creature to come after him, to pass under the men within the tree. And surely this thing did prove to be; for there came very quick, a great and ugly thing, that had an ugly way of putting down the feet, and did have seven feet to each side, which was very strange; and the back was as that it were horny, and the belly of the thing did seem to brush heavy upon the earth, and it grunted, as it went, and shook the earth with the weight of it; so that a monstrous noise came from it, upon so hasty a journey. And I did wot that it was not such a thing as did properly pursue after matters of food; but did rather eat of that which did need little haste, but a monstrous strength, to gain. And that it did so make after the man, was in truth because that it had been wounded and made fierce; for, indeed, there came blood from the creature from great wounds upon the back; but how these were made, I could not know in that instant.

And it did go under the tree in which I was hid; and in that moment when it past under the tree, the seven Humped Men did leap out of the branches, and did catch to the brute by the great horns of the spine; and I saw that the wounds were in the joints of the spine, as was plain when the back did work, with the going of the creature. And the seven Humped Men took the sharp stones from under their arms, and did strike very brutal in the wounds that were in the joints of the spine; and the creature roared and cried, and went onward into the trees at a great speed; and in all the time that it ran, the Humped Men ceased not to strike with the stones.

And sudden, when it was gone a distance off, it did roll very swift over upon the back, first to the right, as that it would go that way; so that the Humped Men did leap off upon the other side. And immediately the creature rolled to that side; and there ran clear of the brute only four of the Humped Men; so that I knew that three were slain. And afterwards, they that lived, ran beyond the beast, and gat up into a second tree, and the one that was chased, did entice the creature to follow, and so did tease it once more to pass beneath the other men; and they very swiftly again to the back of the creature; and so from my sight, striking with the great stones, and the beast bellowing very loud and

piteous. And how many of the Humped Men there were to the beginning of that strange hunting, I know not; but surely there were few that lived to the end.

And surely there were such things as this thing in the beginning of the world, and again was it thus in the end; and I did ponder this a little while, as I did sit upon the great branch, and hearken unto the sound of the hunting, that was now gone a great way off, and was presently beyond my hearing.

And afterward, I gat me to the earth, and did look this way and that way, to see that no beast was anigh, neither any of the Humped Men; and afterward, I eat two of the tablets and drank some of the water.

And when I had gat this far to a readiness for my going, I minded me that I should try the compass again, as I did intend. And surely the machine did point between the North and the South, upon the Westward arc, even as Naani had told unto me; yet, as it did seem, with somewhat more of a Southward pointing than she had made me to think. And because of this telling of the compass, a great ease came upon my spirit; for, surely, was not this but a sure sign that I did go direct unto that hidden place of the world where the Lesser Refuge did abide; but yet was not come over-close, so that the pull of the Mighty Earth-Current of the Great Redoubt was something stronger than in the place where was the Little Pyramid.

And all this did I think very swift to myself, and had a glad uplifting of the heart, as you do perceive; so that I went forward upon my journey, with a great stride, and did scarce fear any strange thing that all the Country did hold, in that moment.

And I went all that day at a strong pace, and did be oft tempted to send the Master-Word unto Naani; yet did keep from so foolish an acting, the which, mayhaps, had brought straightway upon me an Evil Power, and had given me to Destruction when that I was near come to the succour of the Maid. And it was this quick and constant fear of the Evil Forces of the Night Land, that did keep me ever from calling unto Naani, lest that they should discover me, and follow after; and this, I doubt not, you to know by now so well as I.

And at the twelfth hour I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and went forward once more. And lo! at the fifteenth hour, I was come to a place between the mountains, even an upward gorge, very dark and gloomy, and without light for a great way.

And, in verity, I did not want to go up the gorge, in that it was so dreary a place and narrow and horrid and drear-seeming, after the light and wideness of the Country in which I did yet stand.

And presently, I did go past the mouth of the gorge, that I should learn whether there went another way out of that Country. And thiswise, for a great hour more, along the feet of the mountains, and did presently come to a monstrous black river, that was, maybe. a mile wide. And it to be very shallow, and seeming as that the water scarce to cover the mud of the bottom. And here and there a great steam did come from it, and spirtings and moundings-up of the mud in many places, and monstrous bubblings and puffings-up of strange smoke, as that a great heat went beneath it in this place and in that.

And surely it went backward into the country for a mighty way, so far as my sight did go; and I did think it to be no river, but truly a further sea. And there was no way across; for there were no trees anigh, to make me a raft, neither might I wade across; for it might be shallow here and deep there, and the mud be in all places. And, moreover, I had been like to be caught in one of those upburstings of mud, even did I have a raft to go upon. And because of all these things, I gat me back again to the Gorge, and presently I did go upward into the darkness.

Now, I went upward very steady, save that I did stumble oft, and did go through six great hours. And truly it did seem that I went in an utter dark, because that I had been awhile in so constant a light.

And, by that I had been six hours in the Gorge, I was gone right away from the Country of the Seas, and did be as that I was back into some place that was like to the dreadness of the Night Land. For there were in this place and in that place of the Gorge, red fire-holes, even as in the Night Land. Yet not many until that I was come a great way up of the Gorge. And there

did be life of horrid things about the fires, as soon I did wot; so that I made to keep off from them. Yet, as you shall perceive, I must come oft pretty near, because that the Gorge was nowheres scarce an hundred good paces across, and did oft come very narrow, so that I did come oft anigh to the fire-holes, whether that I did heed to or not.

And all that time, and ever, did the Gorge go very sharp upward, so that it was a very weary thing to make great trial of speed, as you shall know. But yet I went so fast as I could do; for I was grown sudden very excited about the heart, and to feel as that I did surely draw anigh to that strange and hid place of the world, where was the Lesser Refuge.

And I went thirty hours in all, even as before, ere that I did come again to sleep, and I eat and drank at every sixth hour, so that my strength should abide within me. And by that I was come to the ending of the thirty hours, I was sorely awearied, and gat me upward of the monstrous cliff that did make the left side of the Gorge, having perceived in a place a great ledge of the rock, that did seem very proper for my purpose of slumber.

And now, truly, was I something fresh and ready; and I eat and drank, and had my gear once more upon me, and so down into the Gorge. And afterward, I went upon my journey for eighteen hours, and did pause but a little while at the sixth and the twelfth hours that I should eat and drink.

And when the eighteenth hour was nigh come, I perceived that the nature of the Gorge was grown very horrid and dank. And in verity, I did feel as that afar upward in the night the black mountains that did make the sides of the Gorge had come together, and did make a monstrous roof unseen in the utter height.

And for a great time there was a horrid darkness, as it had been that the air was grown thick with the fumings of the fire-pits, as I do believe; and beside this thing there was, as I have said, but a dull fire here and another there; so that it was like that there should be a heavy dark. And because that it was so utter black, and because that there were growths upon the rocks in the bottom of the Gorge, I did go but slowly, and with

pain of stumblings; and always with the stink of that place to trouble me half unto a sickness.

And once it did seem to me that some great thing moved in the darkness, and I went downward among the rocks, and stirred not my body for a great while; and sure am I that there went some living monster past me, that did stink as a loathsome grave. And afterward, I went on again.

And three hours did I go thus, and came at last to a place where a fire-hole did shine more ruddy; and I did look well about me, that I should perceive that part of the Gorge the better. And as I stood there, very quiet, away off from the fire, so that it did show no great light upon my person, I did note how utter still was that place; and this to take me anew, as though it had come fresh upon me. And here, there would be the drip of water, and again in that place, and again elsewhere; and all very solemn and very dismal. And the silence to be constant.

And presently, as I lookt, now to this way and again to that, I saw that there was a monstrous slug-thing laid upward against the black side of the Gorge, as that it had stood up on end; and the one end of the monster went upward beyond the light from the fire-pit; but the other part did come down and trail into the Gorge, as a long hillock, very ugly and black and beslimed.

And I near sweat with a disgust and horror of the thing; but afterward I had more courage, and spied well upon the brute. And surely, it moved not at all, any more than the side of the cliff of the Gorge, and I conceived that it stood not upward upon any feet; but clung to the rock, even as you shall see a slug to go. And for a great space I was very quiet and moved not, neither did I make to hide, but stood there very stupid.

Yet, in a time, I had more of courage which brought strength unto my heart, and I began again to go upon my way, but with an utter caution, and I then to creep for a weary time upon my hands and knees among the dank and weariful rocks and boulders that lay in the bottom of the Gorge.

Now, I came clear of the darkness and the slime and the stinking in about twelve hours after the time that

I did think the mountains to be a roof unto the Gorge; and the air was now free and did seem as that some life and health did abound in it; and the fires did be more plentiful, and burned very bright and clean, and threw all their fumings upward, so that there was no more any bitter pain of sulphur within my throat.

And surely, it was with a thankful heart that I went onward, and with a good speed; for there was much of light all about me, in that there burned an hundred fire-pits here and in that place; so that I saw clear before me and behind, and conceived that the slugs did abide only in the closed part of the Gorge. And oft I did take the air very full into my lungs, for the sweetness of it, after the horrid stenchings that I had abode all those hours.

Now, presently, I saw a small cave that went inward on the side of the Gorge. And I lookt into the cave, and found it to be sweet and clean, and very dry. And there was a small fire-pit off from the mouth of the cave, that did throw a good light for my purpose; so that I saw there was no creeping thing or horror in the place; and I went in, and made to prepare for my slumber.

But truly, when I was come to look upon myself, I was utter soiled and did seem as that I stank with the slime and disgust of the dark part of the Gorge, where I had gone upon my hands, and upon my belly. And because of this, I was set that I should not eat or come to sleep, without I washed me.

And I went out from the cave, and there was a spring near to the fire-pit, as was oft in that part of the Gorge. And the spring was hot and did fill a hollow of the rock, very quiet and with a fuming of sulphur, as I did bend above it. And I washed mine hands and face and mine armour and gear, in the hot spring, and did dry me with my pocket-cloth; and so was sweetened and put to happiness of mind.

And I went back into the cave, and did sit in the mouth of the cave, with the Diskos to mine hand; and I eat four of the tablets, for I was gone a mortal long while without, and afterward I drank some of the water. And as I did eat and drink, I lookt out upon the lightness

of the Gorge before me, and with a cheerful and composed heart.

Now, presently, when I was done eating, and come very ready to fall upon sleep, I went out from the cave and gat me certain boulders, the which I did carry into the cave. And when I was come back for the last time, I put them very secure in the entrance-way, that no small stinging creature come at me as I slept. And after that, I made ready, and went to my sleep, having sweet thoughts and slumbrous, of the Maid.

Now I slept very quiet that time, and was not over troubled with the chill of the Gorge, which was but little in that place, both by reason of the fire-pit and because that the cave did help to keep my warmth to me. And I had a deep slumber for eight hours, and waked then pretty tired, but strong to go upon my way.

And I went forward very swift, and all renewed, as it were; and my strength and hope did make naught of any terror that should lie to bar my way, neither did I have further heed of the boulders that lay always upon my path, but did go over them with quick leapings, and a wondrous and thrilling eagerness of the heart within me.

And, sudden, in the end of the tenth hour, I perceived that the mighty walls of blackness that made the sides of the Gorge did be no more there, and that I was come truly upon the end of the Gorge. And I near trembled with hope and astonishment; for when I was gone a little way on, I had ceased to go upward any more, and was come clear out from the mouth of the Gorge, and did peer forth across a mighty country of night.

Now this Land was very new and strange, and had a great light in this part, and a wondrous grim darkness in that. And I did pause a great while to determine how that I should go properly. And presently I bethought me of the compass, and did draw it forth, and set it upon the earth, that I should see how it did act. And truly it did go almost as Naani had told to me; so that I was very sure in all my being that I was in verity come anigh to the hidden Refuge. But yet did the compass give me no proper guiding to my way; so that I was no more wise to this end than before, only that I had the comfort of that which it did seem to assure.

And, in a little while, I went forward into the Land, and did hope that I should come presently to some matter to help my choice. And I went first toward a certain great glowing of fire that lay before me, and did seem joined to another great glare that went afar to my left.

And I found the ground of that Land to be very fair for my feet, and to have in this place and that certain bushes, even as it did seem to me, of the kind that we named moss-bushes in the Night Land, as you do know. And I made a very good speed, and went thus until I had gone for maybe six long hours. And by that time, I was come anigh to the glowing of light; and did keep now a strong caution to my going; for truly, as I did know from the tellings of the Maid, there were very horrid and dreadful Powers in that Land, and I did well to remember that I was come again to parts where might be the destruction of the spirit.

Now, presently, I came again upon my feet, and did take a new look around that Land. And I had the mouth of the Gorge to my back, and this I perceived by the shining of the fire-pits that made the place shown to me.

And to the left of the Gorge was an utter blackness, as I did conceive of black and monstrous mountains, through which the Gorge did come. And to the right side of the Gorge there were many low volcanoes, that went always along the feet of the great mountains that made the right wall of the Gorge. And I saw the feet of these dark mountains, because that the light from the little volcanoes made a glare upon the lower slopes.

And so shall you have some knowing of that part of this second Land of Night.

Now I made no more to delay, but went unto the right, and did keep the chain of the little volcanoes something level to my course; though a great way off. And I went thus with a strange growing of hope, and an excitement, for ten hours, and had eat not then for more than twenty hours, and surely not since the sixth hour of that day and this because that I was so utter shaken from my calmness of going.

And at the tenth hour, I saw that there rose a red-shining out of the Land before me, as that it came upward from a mighty pit. And I made slow my way, and so,

when I was gone on for two great hours more, I saw that monstrous figures went about, against the red glare of the shining. And I gat me down into the bushes which were very plentiful in that part.

And I stayed there for a certain while, and made a watch upon the red-shining and the figures; and, truly, it did seem to me that there were horrid giants in that Land, even as in the Night Land. And afterward, I crept away, and went outward from the little volcanoes, into that part of the Land that was dark, save, as you do mind, for the glare of fire-holes in this part and that.

And I went now with an utter care; for the giants had put a new caution into my heart, and I did surely mean that I should live to rescue mine own Maid, and have joy through all my life. And thereafter, I went with the Diskos in my hand, and at each hour that was the sixth, I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and so did keep my strength very good within me.

Now, presently, I was come to a place where the Land did go downward a great slope, and there was a difference in the earth that went beneath my feet, and no great plenty of the bushes; but only one in this place and one in that, and nowhere any fire-hole.

And I gat me down and did feel the earth with my hands, and lo! I did find presently smooth stones, and afterward olden shells. And immediately, a great delight took me; for Naani had told how that the Lesser Pyramid stood something nigh to the shore of an ancient sea, that was long dried up in the years of eternity. And surely it might be that I was come down into the dry bottom of that same olden sea, and should presently have sight of the Little Pyramid.

And because that hope was put so fresh into me, I went forward through, maybe, thirty hours, across the olden sea-bed; but in all that time I had no sight of the lights of the Lesser Redoubt. And a great trouble began to take me; for, indeed, Naani had not told me how great was the sea; and it might be that I should wander a weariful age across it, before that I come to the far side.

Now, as I did go across the bed of the great sea, I heard strange sounds, now in this part of the darkness, and now in that; and oft did there be a noise, as if things did run this way and that way in the bed of the sea. And once, afar off in the night, there did be a strange and horrid screaming; so that I did know truly that the monsters of that Land were out, and did go about in the dark.

And, as you shall perceive and understand, I was all unknowing of the lore of that Land; so that I knew not what to think of this strange sound or that, neither knew I what they might portend, but only that, as I did say, there were Monsters abroad. And I could do no more than have my way forward with an utter care always, and be very ready with the Diskos, or to hide, each as maybe according to the need.

And, surely, I went one-and-forty hours that day, and eat and drank after every sixth hour. And before this, in the seven-and-thirtieth hour, I heard a great roaring and bellowing in the night, coming nigh unto me; and afterward the thudding of monstrous feet, as that a giant ran past me in the darkness, and did make a chase of some creature. And the thudding of the feet and the roaring went far off into the night; and there did seem presently to come back to me from a great way, a little screaming; but of this thing I had no surety; and I abode very hushed in a clump of bush, until quietness was come again all about; for there had been an utter frightening sound in the horrid voice and in the thudding of the great feet.

Now, in the one-and-fortieth hour of that day, I came upon the farther shore of the olden sea. But lo! there was nowhere any light to tell me aught of the Lesser Refuge. And truly, a great doubt and bewilderment took me; for, indeed, I could not perceive how it might be that I saw not the lights of the embrasures of the Lesser Pyramid. And a great despair took me; so that I sat down there upon the shore of the olden sea, and had no heed of anything for a while.

And I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and again to my journey. And I made that I should keep along the shore of the sea, the which I did

through twelve hours, and was then still so much in doubt as ever.

And I ceased from my journeying, and lookt about me over the Land, and lo! I did note how that a weak and strange shining was in the air of the Land, at a great way; as it had been that a far spreaded and faint glowing made a little glare into all the night unto my left and before me.

And afterward, I did make across that Land, unto the place where it did seem that the dull shining was something bright. And I went thus through eighteen hours, and did make pause at each sixth hour, and eat and drank very resolute; though, in verity, it did seem as that even so small a matter as the tablets did be like to choke me. And by this is it plain to me how great an anguish was come upon my spirit, lest that I was all astray, and should have no joy to succour mine Own.

And thrice in the time that I did go, there did be a running of feet amid the darkness; and odd whiles strange and horrid cryings in the night; so that I put a force upon my despair, and hid me; for, indeed, I had no right to lose care of my life, if there did be any chance yet that I find the Maid.

And lo! in the eighteenth hour, which was truly the thirtieth of that day, I found the shining in the night to be grown very plain, and an utter stinking of sulphur; and truly I did be aware that the Land went upward.

And I made upward through seven hours, and the light did grow more plain, and was of a dull redness, very sombre and heavy.

And, indeed, as I did perceive, I was come to an upward sea of fire, as it were the deep inwards of a low and utter monstrous volcano, that was flat of the top and utter big across. And, in verity, I did look downward into the fires of the inward earth, and a very wondrous sight was it, to stand there alone upon the cliffs of that everlasting sea. And a great heat came upward from the dull and grim fire of that gloomy sea, and a reek of sulphur; so that I was like to be choked, and did go backward from the edge of the cliff.

And surely, I was come to the end of that Dark Land upon that side, and had nowhere perceived the Lesser

Pyramid in all the night of my travel. And a new despair came upon me; for, indeed, it seemed I was come all astray in the night of the World, and did nowise have any knowing whether I stood near to the Country of the Lesser Redoubt, or whether that I was gone half across the World unto a strange place.

And, then, as the despair troubled my spirit and dulled the beating of my heart, a sudden thought did light up a fresh hope within me; for, indeed, as you do know, I was come upward of a great height, and did surely have a huge view over all that Land; and mayhaps the Lesser Pyramid did lie somewhere in a valley, if, in verity, it did be anywheres at all in that Country. And I turned me from the cliffs, and lookt backward over all the night of the Land; but there was nowhere in all that Country the shining of the Lights of the Lesser Pyramid.

And lo! of a sudden I did know that there was something in the night. And I stared, with a very keen and anxious look. And behold, there was the black shape of a great pyramid afar off in the night, that did show against the shining of the distant light; for it did stand between me and the far-off fires. But until I was come to that place, whence I did look, I had not stood to have it plain against the shining upon the other side of that Land.

And how I did feel in that moment, I have no words to set out unto you. But surely was my heart gracious with thankfulness, and I ready to leap with joy and hope, and all my body thrilled with an excitement that would not have me to be silent; so that, suddenly, I began to shout foolishly across the night But came soon to wisdom and silence, as you shall think.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAID OF THE OLDEN DAYS

Now, as you shall perceive, all mine utter despair was turned in a moment into an huge gladness and a great hope; so that it did seem to me that I should be with my dear One in but a little while. Yet was this an over-hope and expectation, and was not like to have a swift satisfying; for, truly, I was made aware of naught, save that I did perceive the shape of a great pyramid, going upward into the night.

And I knew that the Pyramid did surely stand upon an hill in the midst of that dark Country, for only so might it show so great and high. And I set me to run swift downward into the Land, so that I should make a strong going unto the Pyramid.

And I ran for a few little minutes, and lo! I fell headlong, and did truly feel as that I had brake my neck with the hardness and pain of my fall. And I had no power to go forward any more for a great while; but did just be there where I did fall, and very helpless and moaning a little; so that any creature had been able to slay me, if that it had come upon me in that time.

Yet, presently, I was able to sit upon the earth, and did hold my neck with my hands, and afterward the pain went away; so that I gat once more to my feet. But now I went forward very wisely, and had, moreover, an anxiousness in my heart; for, indeed, how did

it be that the Pyramid was so utter dark, if that it did be the Lesser Refuge, in truth. And immediately there did rise in me a fear that it should be some House of Evil in the dark of that Land, or some wicked Force working a Pretence and a bewilderment upon my sight. Yet, truly, the thing was plain now against the far-off fires of the Land; and I did have little thought but that it should be, in verity, the Lesser Refuge.

And so did I go downward again into the night of that Land, at the first with a carefulness; but presently with a fierce eagerness and expecting of the heart, the which had been dulled a little time with the horrid shaking and pain of my fall.

And I went four hours across the Land, and did pass in this place and that, fire-holes that made a little red-shining in the night; and because of the fires in those far parts and a-near, there was not an utter dark.

And when I was gone four hours toward the Pyramid, I could no more see the distant shinings, for the bulk of the hill-bottom stood up between, and made all a blackness that way. And by this thing, I did guess that I was come nigh unto the hill; but yet was a great hour more before that I came to it. And in that five hours, since I was come down from the great Volcano, there had past me thrice and again, the sounds of things running in the night, and once there did be a sound as of a giant roaring afar, and a strange and horrid screaming.

And, presently, I was come upward almost to the top of the hill, the which took me nigh three hours. And surely, when I was come that I could see the grimness of the Pyramid, going upward very desolate and silent into the night, lo! an utter shaking fear did take me; for the sweet cunning of my spirit did know that there abode no human in all that great and dark bulk; but that there did await me there, monstrous and horrid things that should bring destruction upon my soul. And I went downward of the hill, very quiet in the darkness; and so in the end, away from that place.

And I was four great hours before that I was come clear away from the hill, and I did feel that there was

not any safety for my spirit in all that Land. And surely I went a little blindly, in the first, and did go with no heed unto my way.

And presently, I was upon the shore of the olden sea, and had no knowing how that I was come there; for, surely, I did think it to be a great way off. But now I do think that the dry bed of the sea did curve around unto that place, or that there did be two, or more, olden seas in that Country of Night.

Now, presently, I sat me down, very weak and bewildered; for it was as that my heart did lie dead within me. And, in verity, you shall perceive how this thing was, for I did know by the tellings of my spirit that there abode evil things in the dark Pyramid upon the hill; and I doubted not but that destruction had come upon the Peoples of the Lesser Pyramid, and that evil creatures and Powers did now abide in that place. And if this thing did be truly so, I was come over-late to the saving of the Maid; and with this thought I was very glad that some evil thing should come that I should fight with it and die quickly; for there was naught then in all the world to make me glad to have life.

And so shall you know the utter desolation that was in my heart; and, truly, I can perceive both the wiseness and the unwisdom of my reasonings; for, indeed, I did have no *sure* knowing that the dark Pyramid did be truly the Lesser Refuge. But yet, in verity, my spirit did know with a certain sureness, and there was no doubt concerning this thing, in all my being.

And, after that I had sat there awhile, I did mind me suddenly that I should send the Master-Word through the night; for, indeed, how else might I ever know whether Naani did yet live; though, in truth, I had little, save desperate hope in this matter; but yet did remember how that I had seemed odd times of my journey to hear the beat of the Master-Word with my spirit, out of all the dark of the world. And, in verity, if Naani answered not to the Word, but there came instead an Evil Power to destroy me, I should but cease me of mine utter heart-ache.

And I stood me upon my feet, and looked outward about me into the blackness of that Land. And I sent

the Master-Word with my brain-elements; and immediately I called Naani, thrice, sending the call with my brain-elements.

And lo! in a moment, as it did seem, there broke around me out of all the mystery of night, low and solemn, the Master-Word, beating in the night. And immediately there did sound within my brain a far, small voice, very lone and faint, as that it had come from the end of the world. And the voice was the voice of Naani and the voice of Mirdath, and did call me by mine olden love-name.

Then, indeed, I did near to choke with the utter affright of joy that did take me in the heart, and also I was shaken with a mighty excitement, and my despair was gone, as that I had never known it. For, in verity, Naani did live and did call unto me with her brain-elements; and surely I had not heard the voice of mine Own for an utter age of grim labour and dread.

And the voice was, as I did say, as that it came from one that did be in a far place of the earth. And, in verity, whilst I stood dazed with a great joy that the Maid did live, I knew within me, concerning the fear that she was utter far off; and what peril might come anigh to her, before that I should stand to her side, to do battle for her life and well-being and mine own joy.

And lo! in the same moment, and before that I made further speech unto Naani, I did wot that someone did be a little way off from me, in the bushes, where a fire-hole did burn anigh to me; and it was as that my spirit knew this thing, and told of it unto my brain. And I made no answer unto the Maid, across all the dark of the world; but went very swift into a great bush that was nigh to the fire-hole, upon this side.

And I lookt through, into the open space that did be about the fire-hole. And there was a little figure that did kneel, sobbing, upon the earth, beside the fire-hole; and truly it was a slim maid, and she did seem as that she harked very desperate, even whilst yet she did sob. And surely, mine own soul did *Know*, all in one white moment of life. And she there, unknowing, and harking unto a cry of the spirit, that she did think to come through

all the desolation of the night—even from the Mighty Pyramid. For oft, as I did perceive, had she cried unto me in all that lonesome month, and known no answer; neither that I was making a desperate way unto her; for, indeed, her weakness was great, so that she had no power to throw the Word strongly afar, neither to make plain her spiritual cryings through any mighty space of the æther.

And lo! I drew in my breath, and set my teeth a moment, to steady my lips; and I said:—"MIRDATH," out of the bush where I did be, and using natural human speech. And the Maid ceased from her weeping, and lookt this way and that, with an utter new fear, and with a frightened hope that did shine with her tears in the light from the fire-hole. And I divided the bush before me, and went through the bush, so that I came out before her, and did be there in my grey armour; and I did pause then, and was all adrift in myself; for my heart said that I should take this Maid into mine arms again; for that I was come again to be with Mirdath after an utter lost Eternity. But yet was I all paused; for truly she was Naani and she was Mirdath, and she did be a stranger in mine eyes, and very dainty and pretty and shaken with woe and sore trouble and grief.

And in that same moment of my coming unto her out of the bush, she screamed and fell back from me, and strove weakly to gain unto the hither bushes; for, truly, she knew not what was come upon her in that first little moment. And immediately she saw that it did be an human man, and no monster to slay her, and in that instant I said the Master-Word unto her, aloud, that she should have knowledge of peace and help. And I told my name, and said I am That One. And she knew this thing, even as my lips made the sounds. And she cried out something in an utter broke voice, and ran unto me, and thrust her two small hands into my charge and keeping, and fell thence into a great sobbing and shaking, so that I was all in trouble to ease her; but did keep a silence and held fast her hands, for I had not on mine armoured gloves.

And she leaned against me, very weak, and seeming

wondrous like to a child. And lo! in a while she ceased to sob, and did but catch her breath this time and that, but said no word. And I bethought me that she did suffer of hunger, for I perceived that she had been long wandering and alone, and was come unto the end of hope, when that I did come.

And the Maid stood there yet silent, for she might not yet command her mouth to speak. And she trembled as she stood. And I opened my left hand, and lookt at the hand within my palm, and surely it was utter thin and wasted. And I made no more pause, but lifted mine Own and set her easy upon the earth, with an hump of smooth rock unto her back. And I stript off my cloak very quick, and put it about her, for she was scarce covered with her clothes that had been all torn among the bushes; so that part she shook with an utter chill and part because of weakness, for she was nigh to be starved unto her death, and destroyed with her grief and lonesomeness.

And I took from my back the scrip and the pouch, and I gat a tablet from the scrip, and brake it into my cup, and with the water I made a little broth very swift upon an hot rock that was to the edge of the fire-hole. And I fed the broth unto the Maid, for truly her hands did shake so that she had spilt it all, if that I had done otherwise.

And she drank the broth, and was so weak that presently she did fall again to sobbing, yet very quiet; so that I strove not to be troubled in the heart; for, indeed, this thing was but reasonable, and not cause for me to have an anxiousness. But I put my hands under the cloak and took her hands into mine and held them strong and firm; and this did seem to bring something of peace and strength unto her; so that presently the trembling and the weeping went from her. And, indeed, the broth was surely helpful in this matter.

And presently, I knew that her hands did stir a little within mine, and I loosed somewhat of my grip; and immediately, she graspt my hands with a weak and gentle grasp; but lookt not yet at me; only did stay very quiet, as that she did gather her strength within her. And, indeed, I was content; save that an anxious-

ness of the heart did stir me this time and that, lest some monster should come upon us. And because of this trouble, I did hark about me, now and oft, and with a new and strange fearfulness of danger, because that now mine Own was given unto my charge; and surely my heart would break, if that there came any hurt unto her.

Now, in a while, the broth did make bright the eyes of the Maid, and she did begin to talk; and at whiles had pauses, because that she lacked of strength, and there was more to be told than an human may have the heart-strength and cunning to make plain. And twice she did come again to sobbing; for, truly, her father was dead and the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt all slain and dispersed through the night of that Land.

And I learned that an Evil Force had made action upon the Peoples within the Lesser Redoubt; so that some, being utter weak by reason of the failing of the Earth-Current, had opened the Great Door, and gone forth into the night. And immediately there had come into the Lesser Pyramid, great and horrid monsters, and had made a great and brutish chase, and had slain many; but some had escaped forth into the night.

And with these had come Naani, after that her father, the Master Monstruwacan, had been slain by a shaggy man, very brutal and monstrous. And there had been three maids with Naani, when that she made escape into the night; but there had come certain creatures upon them, as they did sleep among the bushes, and had stolen two, and the other maid had run off, as did Naani, and they had neither met the other any more.

And this dreadful happening unto the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt, had been a great while gone, as it to seem to her; but she had no means to tell me how long this time should be; for, in verity, how should she make a count. Yet had it been a dread long while unto her; and I found presently, that she had been lost through all that time that I did make my journey unto her; for, indeed, this thing I discovered by asking concerning my callings unto her. And she had heard none that did come to her, in any time since she had escaped out of the Lost Refuge into this dreadful Land.

Yet, in verity, oft had she callen unto me, until that her heart did grow sick with the desolation of her lonesomeness and her utter forsakeness. And her callings had told unto the Evil things of the Land that she did be in this part and that; for there had come things and beasts in search for her; but having the gift of the hearing, she had known of their approach, most whiles, and had come free from them; yet oft-times with piteous and fearful runnings and hiding among the rocks and the bushes, so that she had grown afterward to make no calling unto me, save odd whiles, lest she bring the monsters upon her. And, indeed, as you do know, naught had come plain unto me, for she was so utter weak that she had no power of her brain-elements to send the Word afar or the tellings of her spirit.

And because that she was so sorely chased, she had come nigh to be naked, even as I found her; for the bushes and the rocks had torn her garments from her, and she had naught with which to make any proper mending of them. And for food she had eat the moss upon the rocks, and odd strange berries and growths, and had drunk of the waters of the hot springs; and oft had she been made utter sick, because of the sulphur, or somewhat, of the water and, maybe, the poison of odd plants. Yet, as I did think, it was like that the first did save her life from the second; but in this thing I do make only a guessing.

And in all that dreadful time, since that she had come to be quite alone, she had heard a score drear things; for there had been once the slaying of a young maid nigh unto her, by some Brute out in the darkness of the Land; and thrice and more had she heard the feet of people running this way and that, and the tread of giants pursuing. And by this telling I did understand those things which mine ears had told to me as I did go across that Land, and surely a new pity and sorrow and horror did come upward within me. And the Maid told me how that she came once upon certain of the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt, as they did hide among the bushes; but they ran, with no heed to her callings that she did be human, even as they; and by this is

it plain the sore and dreadful panic that was upon the hearts of such.

And the bitter chill of the Land had made her to strive alway to be nigh unto the fire-holes that were very plentiful; but even as this did be needful unto her, so was it a thing that drew the Monstrous Brutes of that Land, even as I had found in the Night Land, and in the Upward Gorge. And because of this, she was oft made to stay afar off in the utter cold of the night.

Yet, in truth, odd whiles she did be so desperate, that she would make the venture, and so mayhaps have a time of warmth; and because of this, she had been nigh slain in her sleep, twice and thrice. Moreover, there were snakes about the fires, though not over-plentiful in all parts, and there did be spider-crabs and monstrous scorpions.

And by this thing, she had known that her death was surely nigh; and lo! out of all the night of the world had come the beat of the Master-Word, strong and powerful, beating as a low and spiritual thunder out of all the dark of the night. Yet had she thought of me, only as speaking from the far-off Mighty Pyramid; so that the cry had brought naught of hope unto her, but only a newer and more known despair. And, behold, in a little minute, there had come her name, spoken surely with the tongue; and a name that was different from the name that my spirit had said after the beat of the Word. And immediately, I had come out of the bush, and she had fallen back in a sudden great fear that a monster was stolen upon her; and then did see a young man in grey armour, and did know in one instant that I was that olden one of her memory dreams, and the one that had spoken unto her in the spirit across half of the dead world, as it did seem. And now was I come through all that unknown desolation and affright, to succour her. And she was immediately safe; but yet all broken because of her weakness and her utter joy and her sweet honour for me.

And this is the chief of that which she did tell unto me; and the way that she had seen and did regard the marvel of this our coming together. But, surely, no man was made ever to be worthy of the way that she

did look upon me, or of the words that she did say unto me in her weakness and happiness.

And presently, she slept; and, surely, I doubt whether she had slumbered so peaceful and proper for a great month; for she never to have known when any evil thing should come upon her in her sleep. And this to be a very dreadful feeling, as you do know well; for you do know how I had been in this same matter.

Now, while Naani did sleep, I stript off mine armour, and took off mine under-suit, which was named the Armour-Suit, and a very warm and proper garment, and made thick that it should ease the chafe of the armour. And afterward, I put on the armour again; but the suit I folded, and laid beside the Maid; for, truly, she was nigh unclothed, by reason of the bushes and the rocks, that had rent her garments all-wise.

And I stood watch for the Maid, the while that she did slumber; and surely she went ten long hours. And I walked upon this side of the fire-hole and now upon that, and did oft cease, that I might hearken both with mine ears and with my spirit; for, truly, I was all wakened to a new care and delight, and did have a fresh and doubled fear of any Horrid Creature or Force of Evil. And this shall be very plain to you.

And in the end of ten long hours, the Maid wakened, and I ran to her all joyed that she was come again to knowledge and to be that I could talk with her.

And she sat upward and looked at me, and there was new light and movement in her, so that I knew her strength was come back into her. And for a little minute, she said naught unto me, the while that I did ask how she did be; and she lookt at me very keen, so that I wondered some wise in a daze, what was in her mind.

And she askt me, of a sudden, how long it did be since that I had slept. And having not thought to put away her asking, because that the question was over sudden, said four-and-eighty hours, which should be three days and the half of a day of four hours and twenty; and this thing I knew, because that I kept alway a very careful counting of the hours, lest that I get all adrift, and know not how long I was taken to come to this place and that,

And, truly, even as I told this thing to the Maid, I was grown very quaint in the head; for, indeed, I was gone a wondrous while without slumber, and had done much and bitter work in that time; and before then had been much lacking of rest, as you do know.

And, sudden the Maid cried out something, and tost the cloak from her, and had me into her arms, and did heed not to have any foolish shame of her nakedness. And, in verity, I knew not how I was gone so strange; but do see now that I was nigh to swoon for lack of slumber and rest.

And she kept me very steady for a little, and afterward helped me to be laid upon the ground; and she put the scrip and the pouch under my head; and so I did lie very calm and restful, and did be the more so, because that I was grown so tired in the heart, the which did make my head to be very husht, as that all the world was grown very quiet in a moment.

And the Maid did mind then that she did lack to be properly covered, and she gat the cloak, and put it about her, and did afterward sit a little beside me. and did rub my hands. And presently, I was something more to myself, and she did grow more happy of her mind, and made to give me something for my stomach; for, indeed, I was grown those late hours to be foolish and to have no wiseness to proper eating.

And she did lift my head, the while that she did take the scrip from under, and kept me very sweetly upon her knee, and so until she had gat free a pack of the tablets, and the flask and the cup; for I had put all matters back into the scrip before Naani had gone unto sleep, and because of this, I had not been able to eat or drink aught, save by awakening her, as you perceive; for, indeed I had put the scrip and the pouch under her head for a pillow, as I have told.

And she would not bide that I should do aught; but only did ask concerning the making of the water, and was wondrous amazed to see how the powder did fizz up and become water; and indeed, she had too much into the cup, for, truly, it rose up and ran to the ground. And when she had done thus, and ceased to marvel, she

put three of the tablets into the water, and made me a broth, even as I had made a broth for her ; but, indeed, I was in no need, and had done very well to eat the tablets and drink the water. Yet, truly, I was not wishful to lack the love of her way, as you may think.

Now while I did drink the broth, I did be very restful upon the earth, and mine head against mine own Maid ; and I did mind me now that I tell her concerning the Armour-Suit that I did mean for her wear.

Yet I said not that I had stript it from me, for then she had been like to say nay, and to trouble that I was like to come to a chill, as is the way of a woman. But, indeed, I might so well have told her, for truly, she did know on the moment, and set to a little unto weeping ; yet very gentle and sweet, and did kiss me as I lay there, and say such things as should make a young man the better to have heard, if but that his own dear Love doth say the same.

And surely, I was asleep in but a little moment, and with a great love and delight in my heart and in all my being.

And, truly, I waked not for twelve great hours. And when that time was gone, lo ! I came awake, and surely the Maid did sit beside me, so bonny, and so winsome and pretty that mine arms went unto her in a moment, and she into them, and gave me a loving and tender kiss ; and afterward slipt away from me, very sensible and loving ; and did stand up and turn about to be lookt at. For she did wear the Armour-Suit, and surely it was loose upon her ; but yet very pleasing, being close-knit. And I to my seat, from lying, that I might see the Maid the better. And, in verity, I must kiss her again ; for she did be with her hair all about her, that she look pretty unto me ; and her little feet did be bare, and so that they made my heart new tender to look upon them ; for truly she was utter lost of foot-gear. And I to my knee to her ; and she, not to deny me, did come to be kist again.

And after we had eat and drunk, I did count the packs of the tablets, and was thankful in all my being that I had been careful and denied my belly ; for I did perceive that there were left enough for our needs, if that we made

a good speed, and did not fear to be empty. And of the water-powder, as it might be named, there were left two full flasks, and somewhat of that one that I had drunk from, all my journeying. And by this thing you shall perceive that we did not be like to die for the need of such matters.

And here, as it doth occur unto me, I do ponder how it did be that we had no thought to slay any small creature for our food; but, mayhap, we had no knowledge this way; for surely, they did not this thing to my knowing in the Mighty Pyramid. But yet, as I have said before this, I have not all knowledge of the doings of the Peoples. But, in verity, I never saw joint meat in all the time of that far Life that I do wot of. Yet, had we but slain somewhat for our hunger in that great wandering, we had been less empty in the belly.

Now, before that we should do aught beside, we must contrive that Naani have some gear for her feet; and to this intent, I did make a search into the pouch, and surely I found that there did be a change pair of inner shoes, that were made to go within mine own shoes of the grey metal.

And at this I was wondrous glad, and did make the Maid to sit upon a little rock, while that I made a fitting of the shoes. And, surely, they did be utter big and clumsy upon her little feet; so that I was in surprise to know how great is a man, beside a Maid. But in the end I had a cunning thought, for I cut off all the side of a strap, throughout the length of the strap, very thin and careful, and so had a lace to tie the boots around the tops, which were soft and easy for such a purpose. And after that, I stood away to look at the Maid, and neither she nor I were truly pleased; for, indeed, she was too pretty to be so hid and muffled. Yet were we glad otherwise; for now she might go without hurt to her feet.

And afterward, we packt our gear, and she did make a bundle of her torn garments; for, truly, they might be proper somewise to our need. And so we to begin the way out of that Desolate Land.

And we went forward together across the Land, and the journey was no more a weariness, but of a close and

sweet joy; yet did I have a new anxiousness, as you do perceive, lest that any monster come to harm Mine Own.

And we went twelve great hours in the bed of the olden sea, and did eat twice in that time. And surely the Maid did grow utter weak and weary; for she was not come proper unto her strength; yet did she make no odd saying to tell me of this thing. But indeed, I did know; and I stopt in the thirteenth hour, and took her into mine arms, even as I should carry a babe; and I went forward with her, and did hush her protestings with a kiss, and afterward she did but nestle unto me and shelter against my breast.

And I bade the Maid to sleep; but, indeed, she had no power to this end, for her body did ache very sore; but yet did she strive to give me an obedience in this thing. And in the eighteenth hour, when that I stopt to have food and drink, surely she did be awake, yet had she been utter silent; and I made to scold her; but she gat from mine arms, and did go upward upon her toes, and put her finger against my lips very naughtily. And afterward she did be impudent unto me, and did deny me to kiss her. But she went unto my back, and did open the scrip, and gat me to my food, even as a quiet and proper wife should go. And she did be so sedate that I knew she had mischief in her heart of harmless kind.

Now, in a little while, the Maid did pack the scrip; and so we did make ready again to go forward, for I was grown anxious, as you may suppose, that we should come to some fire-hole, that we have a place for sleep that had warmth and light; for, truly, the cold of the Land did be drear and horrid.

And I stoopt to take the Maid into mine arms, that I should carry her; but she did say nay, that she did be well rested. And I not to gainsay her, for she did mean the thing, as I perceived, and I had no desire to force my way upon her, save when I saw truly that she did seem to go unwisely. And, indeed, when such did be the case I did strive with her, only with a nice reasonableness, as you shall know.

And the Maid walkt by my side, and wondrous silent;

but yet very nigh to me, so that I knew she did be very full of love to me, and of that quaint and sweet humbleness that love doth breed odd whiles in a woman when she doth be with her man, if but that man be also her master.

And presently, I perceived that the cloak did be over mine own shoulders, and I took it and would have put it about the Maid; but truly she did not allow this; and when I did be stern with her, that she obey me in this matter, she did stand upon her toes, that she might kiss me, and pulled my head down, and surely she kist me and coaxed me that I wear the cloak, else should I give pain to her, in that I did surely be cold because she did wear the Armour-Suit.

Yet, I would not hark to this thing; so that the Maid did be truly in trouble. And first she made a threatening that she wear but her olden garments that did be only rags, if that I did persist. But this I was to be foolishness and scarce-meant, and did as much need to smile at her as that I did think to scold her; but I did be firm that she wear the cloak.

And lo! she went sudden into crying; and this had been beyond my thoughts. And truly, it set me all adrift; for I perceived that she did be greatly distrest concerning this matter, when I had conceived that she did but mean this thing for tenderness' sake. But mine heart helped me to understand, and I saw how she did be truly shamed, in her sweet womanhood, if that I helped her not in this matter; for she did feel that she was made to do hurt unto that one that was her Love. And this thing I do pray you to think upon, that you understand; for, indeed, until that I was made to think, I had not seen it thiswise, for her.

And in the end, I came to agreement with the Maid, that we wear the garment hour by hour, in turn; and she to wear it the first hour and I to wear it the second hour; and so to go forward.

And truly, this did be an happy arranging; but yet she stampt her foot a little, as I put the cloak about her. And thrice in the hour did she ask me concerning the time that was gone; and surely, when the hour was but up, she had the cloak off in a moment, and went to

my back and cast it upon my shoulders, and after to my front, and made it fast upon my breast; and so eager and naughty was she to this, that I took her by the shoulders, and shook her, somewhat, even as she had made to stamp at me; yet mayhaps with more of laughter. And she to take no heed at all; but to button the cloak and be very sedate. Yet, in verity, I caught her up into mine arms, and kissed her, for a sweet and naughty Maid; and she very willing, now that she had gotten something of her way.

But yet in an hour, I did have the cloak about her, again; and so did straiten matters, as you shall conceive.

Now, when we had gone forward, through five great hours, I perceived that the Maid did be utter worn, but yet did make pretence that she was unwearied. And because I saw how she did be, I did heed and be anxious only that we come to some rock, to be for our safe refuge, and mayhap there to find an hole or cave, that should be somewhat to keep our heat about us; for there was nowhere any fire-hole anigh in all those hours.

And presently, we came to a part where there did be rocks, and we went to and fro in the gloom, and came in the end to a place where the rocks did go upward into the night, as that it had been a small and ancient cliff.

And surely in a while I found a hole that did go inwards of the rock; and the hole did be above mine head, yet when I was come to it, and had made the Diskos to spin therein, that I should have light to see whether there did be any creature or creeping thing in the hole, I was well pleased; for truly it did be sweet and dry.

Now when we were come into the hole of the rock, the Maid did slip the scrip and the pouch from my shoulders; and she gat out the tablets, and made some of the water, and did be very swift and natty, and all to the despite of the gloom that did be utter in that little cave.

Now, when that we had made an end of eating and drinking, I was very ready for sleep; for, truly, it was six and twenty great hours since that I did last slumber; but for the Maid it did be eight and thirty great hours; for, as you do mind, she had made no sleeping when that she did lie in mine arms for six hours of our journeying.

And I made how we should sleep; and put the cloak about the Maid; but surely she did refuse, very piteous, and seeming to have also somewhat of doubt and puzzlement. But in this thing I did be very stern and intending; for she did not be over-warm clad, as you do know, and moreover, she was but a little One, while I did be wondrous hardy.

And, in verity, I made her to obey, and gave her the scrip and the pouch for her pillow; and she, as it did seem to me, to sob to herself a little in the gloom of the night. But yet did I stay my heart a little stern to mine intent. And I wrapt the cloak about her, and set the scrip and the pouch very nice beneath her head; and afterward, I knelt over to kiss her, before that I came unto mine own slumber. Yet did she turn her mouth from me, and did put her hand above her face to ward me off, the which did grieve me; for truly, I did heed alway that I should never thrust my love upon her in her lonesomeness; but only let it be to her for a shield and for all comfort unto her heart.

And I turned my back, and went a pace away and lay down; for truly there did be no way else but to be near unto the Maid, for it was but a little cave. And I lay very husht, because that I was so sore in the heart. Yet, truly, I could not come unto my slumber, for I was so disturbed in my love; and I stayed very quiet maybe for a great hour; and did fight that I shake not mine armour to jinglings with the utter cold that did make me to tremble. But the Maid did sleep very sweet and calm, as I perceived by her breathings.

Yet, in verity, the Maid did be so much awake as I, and with some sweet and naughty intent of the heart, as my spirit did sudden perceive. And I lay very husht, and did wait to discover what this thing might be.

And I made my breathing to seem as the breathing of one that did sleep, even as that naughty Maid did make pretending. And surely, in a while I did know that she moved very quiet, and came unto me; and I made yet that I slept very sound and strong; though the cold did nigh to conquer all my quietness.

And in a moment I perceived the intent of the Maid; for I did feel the cloak spread over me with a wondrous

gentleness; and afterward there did be a soft kiss put upon my hand; and the Maid back then to her pillow; yet, as I did hear, she brought it something more nigh to me; as that she did crave to be near unto me that was her own Love.

And I sat up, and I put forth my hands suddenly and took the Maid into mine arms; and she to nestle unto me so that I did be wordless, because that I loved her so utter.

And presently, I felt her to stir in mine arms; and I loost her somewhat; for I did be always very mindful that I impose not upon her dear liberty of maidenhood. Yet she made not to go from me, but only to gather the cloak about her; so that we did both be in the cloak. And she askt why this might not be; for surely it did be madness that one should starve and the other be very nice in warmth. And, indeed, this did be but wisdom; yet it might not come the first from me.

And I said to Mine Own that this thing should be; and she reached out, and brought the scrip and the pouch, and placed them for a pillow for my head, and told me that I should put my head thereon. And I askt her how this did be right; for she did need a pillow the more than I. But she bid me to bide, and to have obedience in my turn. And when I was so, she spread the cloak over me, and afterward crept under, and did lie down beside me, and did seem as that she was asleep in one moment.

Yet, though she did be so sedate and matter-of-the fact, as we do say, while that she was wakeful, she did yet nestle unto me very sweet and childlike in her sleep. And surely I did want to kiss her; but yet did refrain from my love; for, truly, I did well that I treat her very gently at such a time, as you do perceive. And, in verity, such a Maid doth make a reverence in the soul of a man.

Now, presently, I was gone over unto sleep; and in seven hours I waked; and in that time had the Maid slumbered through eight hours; yet did I intend that she be not disturbed, until that we were aready to the journey. And I slipt from under the cloak, and put it round her, very gentle. Yet it to be as she did miss

me, even in her sleep; for it to seem to me that she put out her arms in the darkness, and she made a little moaning in her slumber. Yet, in a moment, she did be quiet, and afterward I put the cloak about her again.

And I went then to the opening of the little cave, and put forth my head, and lookt well about, and harked a long while; but there stirred nothing in the night thereabout; neither did my spirit wot of any matter for trouble unto us.

And presently, I gat out two of the tablets; for, as you do know, the Maid had given me the scrip and the pouch to be my pillow, so that I had power to come at these matters, without awaking her; but for her own part, as I did learn after, she had used her torn garments to be for a pillow; yet had made no explaining, as you do mind; and surely this was one of her naughty whimsies; and mayhap she had been so full of a playful happiness—as doth take the heart betimes—that she had made a little mystery where there did be no mystery; and this but to release her joy, and so to say masterful things unto me, out of her impudence; and afterward had meant that she tell me; but yet was gone unto slumber, ere that she did mind her.

Yet, since that time, a new thought hath come unto me that she did mean in the first that she should come into mine arms to sleep, and thereby need no pillow. But afterward, it may hap that she saw with a sudden olden wisdom, all in one moment; and afterward did act lovingly, yet with understanding. And so did change from her intent; yet with no improperness of modesty; but only with a niceness of Sense, which she did make no talk of; but yet did have. And surely, how oft is a man thus wisely ordered, unknowing.

And to cease from these thinkings, and to go forward, I eat two of the tablets, and afterward made some of the water. And lo! the fizzing of the water waked the Maid; and I knew that she reached out very sudden to me; but afterward knew in a moment what did make the sound, and that I did be up and making ready for the journeying.

And she gat up in the darkness, and said my name, and came unto me, and kist my forehead in the dark;

and immediately she ran her hands gently downward of my left arm, and when she came to the cup, she took it from me, and slapt my hand, very dainty. And afterward I knew that she took a sip from the cup, and then did turn that side to me, and so gave me to drink, and did scold me that I had not waked her to tend to my needs; for surely she did be Mine Own, to have her duties to me.

And after that I had drank, she took the cup, and did finish it; and she gat two of the tablets, as I did think, and came afterward and sat upon the rock to my side, and did nestle somewhat against mine armour, and took mine arm and set it about her; and so did make to eat.

But first she put her tablet unto my lips, in the dark, that I should kiss it; and surely this was an olden way of Mirdath My Beautiful One; so that I did be all shaken of the heart. And I kist the tablet; and immediately she nestled unto me, and did begin to eat.

And truly it was as that Eternity had been rolled backward; for I had discovered the soul of mine olden Love in this dainty Maid to my side. Yet, in looks had Mirdath been of an utter differing; but, in verity Naani was wondrous lovely. But, though I to be so stirred, I did be silent; for my heart was very full of memory.

And as the Maid eat, she slipt her fingers between mine, curling them softly; and surely her fingers did be very little; and she stirred mine olden memories again in this thing. And surely I was dumb before my Memory.

And presently, she put up the second tablet, as I did think, that I should kiss it; and I kist it, as before. Yet, ere she did begin again to eat, I did wot suddenly that she hid some intent from me.

And I caught her hand very quick in the dark; and her fingers did close upon the tablet, very guilty; so that I perceived that I had guessed aright. And I opened her fingers; and I found that there did be but the half of a tablet within her hand. And surely she had taken but that one tablet, and had given me the one end to kiss, and afterward the other; so that I should suppose she did eat two proper and complete tablets.

And I perceived that she had done this thing secretly, being minded that if she eat always but one tablet, then should I never lack, even if that we did be over-long coming unto the Mighty Pyramid.

And I askt how oft already had she eat but one, for two. And she confessed in a very quiet voice that this did make the fifth time. And I was so angered, that I took her hand and whipt it thrice, so hard that she had screamed if that she had been any coward. And she said nothing to me, neither went away.

And she began again to eat the half of the tablet, and did eat it from the other hand, as I to be aware, because that her left hand did be hurt. And she wept not, but was very quiet by me; and presently I knew that she kist the whipt hand secretly in the dark.

And afterward, I put mine arm again about her; and she did be there in it, very sober and happy. And when she had made an end of the first tablet, I gave her the second, and she eat it very quiet and content.

And presently I talked with her, and showed her how that this thing did hurt my heart, even as she had been hurt that I did be cold garmented, the while that she did be warm. And I showed her the wickedness that she had done, that she did play so foolish with her life and strength; and well might she be weak and all a-lack.

Yet, did I think a little sweet impudence came into her, as I told her concerning her wickednesses. And I took her then into mine arms, and I showed her how that I knew all the unselfishness and wonder of her heart; and I kist her, and truly her lips did have a lovely glad humbleness as they came unto mine; so that it was as that I had not kist her truly until that moment. And I made her to promise that she never deceive me in such matter again. And indeed she promised; but yet with no ready tongue.

And afterward, we made proper for the journey; and when we had gotten our gear together, I went downward of the rock, and gave the Maid help to come down. And when we did stand at last upon the bottom of the rock, I askt Naani how she did feel, and whether her feet did hurt. And she answered that she did be very well and had no soreness in her feet.

And we went forward then, and she close unto me; and odd whiles with low speech, but more oft with silence, because that we did need that we hark alway for any danger or horror; and also there did be so utter a silence upon that part of the Land, which did be the bottom of the olden sea.

And we eat and drank at the sixth and the twelfth hours; and in the fifteenth hour, we came upon a great slope of the earth; and lo! it did be the far side of the sea. And we went upward for a long hour; and so came to the upward part, and did be able once more to look over the greatness of that Land.

CHAPTER IX

THE HOMEWARD WAY

Now, truly, it did seem very light, after the horrid and lonesome gloom that did lie all-ways in the bottom of the olden sea; and I saw that I was come out upon a part of the Land that did be surely to the right of that place where I made entry into the sea-bed, on mine outward going. And there did be a great plenty of fire-holes, so that mine heart was warmed to see them; yet did I mind to be wary in coming unto them; for, as you do know, there did so oft be life of this kind and that about these fires.

And I lookt now down to the Maid, and she upward to me, and did come more anigh to me, and truly she did be most wondrous pretty and sweet; yet did seem very awearied and pale in the face; so that I made blame upon myself that I had overwalked her; for, in verity, I do think that I was so strong and hard as that I had been made frcm iron; and she but a dear and tender Maid. Yet did she refuse that I should so reproach myself; and did but stand anigh to me and look at me with eyes that were very beautiful. And so I put mine arms about her, and kist her; and afterward lookt again over the Land, that I should shape out our further journeying.

And from that place where I did stand, there spread out all before me the blue shining that I had seen from the mouth-part of the Upward Gorge; yet did it be a great way off. And, indeed, I should tell you in this

place, that it was by the glimmering of this shine within the sky of the night that I had steered, as we did come across the olden sea-bed. And, truly, it was but a broad thing to go toward; but yet did serve me, in that it told me that I went toward the far side of the sea-bed, and made not to go all about in blind circles in the night.

Now, when it was somewhat of seventeen hours since last we had slumber; the Maid was sore wearied, as I did see. And I showed to her how that it did be wise that we have our rest very soon, and so forward again in new strength and ability.

And the Maid did soon agree with me; for indeed she was very weary; and we made it that we should venture unto one of the fire-holes that lay no great seeming away, a little upon our right, which was the Northward-way of that Land.

And we went toward the fire-hole; and, truly, it did be further off than we had thought; for it was a good hour before that we came anigh to it; and, indeed, it to preve a very great and red-glowing shine that went upward into the night, out of the hollow place where it did burn among rocks.

Now, when we were come down unto the fire-pit, I went this way and that among the rocks that did be in the bottom of the hollow, so that I should perceive whether there did be any living creature there hid, that should mayhap come out, unknown, to work us harm.

But, indeed, I discovered nothing of any greatness; yet I saw three snakes, and there were, beside, two scorpion-creatures, as I did name them, that neither went backward from me, nor came against me; but did bide where I saw them, each in an hole of the rock.

And we sat together, and eat and drank; and the Maid very sweet and quiet, as she did begin to eat her second tablet; and, truly, I had knowing that she did remember in all her body that I had whipt her. And, indeed, she did be utter mine.

And we slept that night as we had done before, and shared the cloak over us; for truly, the fire-hole made no great warmth unto us; yet was it less bitter in that part than in the darkness of the Land.

And by that we had come unto sleep, it was twenty good hours since last we had slumber; and truly we did be very wearied; but yet came unto our rest with our spirits set anxious to harken on danger the while that we did sleep.

And we slept seven hours, and did know suddenly of some matter that had need to waken us; and lo! in a moment I did wake, and the Maid in the same instant of time; and there was a great screaming and crying out in the night, that surely affrighted us both; yet did hurt our hearts the more; for it did be the utter cryings and terror of poor humans in the night of that Land. Yet might I do naught; but only wait that I learn more of the matter; for my duty was unto Mine Own, and I had no leave of rashness any more.

Yet, as you do suppose, I was all shaken to go downward of the rock, and afterward to climb out from the hollow, that I should give some help unto they that did need help; but yet might I not leave the Maid.

And immediately, there was a great roaring in one part of the night, and again another roaring in another part of the night; and lo! in a moment the roarings did be answered; and the roarings were the sounds of big and husky voices; so that it did seem that we harked to men so big as houses that did run and shout in the night.

And the Maid did begin to shake, and I put mine arm about her, and drew her backward into the hole, so that she did be into the shadow; and she to tremble like one that was broken in courage; for, truly, she had heard those sounds oft in the night in all the long and dreadful month that she had wandered.

And there came in a moment, a dreadful screaming out in the night, and the screaming did be the screaming of a young maid that doth be slain very brutal. And my heart sickened, because of Mine Own; but my spirit did swell with a strange and utter anger, as that it should burst my body. And the Maid to my side broke into an utter sobbing.

And the screaming of the maid afar off in the dark did end very sudden; but in a moment there did be other screamings in diverse places, and the hoarse shoutings

of the great men and the thudding of mighty feet that ran this way and that, a-chase.

And the cryings of the humans came nearer, and the thuddings of the great feet. And, in verity, in a little minute, it did seem unto me that the sounds did be right upon the hollow; and I crept forward, and peered out. And I felt the night to be full of people running; and immediately there passed by the hollow a clustering of humans that ran ever, and screamed and gasped and wept, panting, as they ran. And the shining of the fire-hole made them plain seen and clear, and they did be both men and women, and were but in rags or utter naked, and all torn by the rocks and the bushes, and did seem, indeed, as that they had been wild things that did go by so swift and lost.

And when the thudding of their feet had gone a long way off over the Land, I heard them bellowing, and afterward a far away screaming, that did have a death note in it; and I knew that those dreadful brute-men did be taking the life from some poor wild humans; and afterward there did be the silence again.

And, surely, it did come to me with a fierce impatience of sorrow, that those people did be without spirit of courage; else had they turned them upon the giants, and slain them with their hands, even if that all had died to compass that slaying; for, truly, they should all die anywise by the giant-men; and they had died then with somewhat to comfort their hate.

Yet, as I do know, the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt had long been born of parents that were starved of the Earth-Current through an hundred-thousand years and more, and because of this thing, they did surely lack somewhat in all ways. Yet was Naani otherwise; but this not to prove aught, save the rule, as we do say.

Now, sudden, as I stooped very husht and troubled in the mouth of the little cave, I knew that Mine Own sobbed dryly in the back part of the cave. And I had gone to comfort her, but that in the same moment, I saw a naked maid run very swift over the edge of the hollow, and did look over her shoulder, as she ran. And she came to the bottom, and crept in under a ledge of

rock that did be in that place; and she did seem utter worn, and gone of the spirit, and desperate. And I perceived in the same instant why that she did go stealthy and swift in that fashion, and to cover, as for her very life; for there came a squat, haired man, so broad as a bullock, who did come silent down into the hollow, looking this way and that, even as a wild beast doth peer, very sudden.

And the Squat Man had instant knowing of the place where the maid did be; and ran in upon her, with no sound.

And I paused not; but leaped all the great way unto the bottom of the hollow, which did be, mayhaps, twenty good feet and more; for mine anger was upon me, and I did mean that I save that one, though I did be powerless to give succour unto those others.

And I fell strong upon my feet, and had no harm of my limbs, for all that the leap did be so high. And in that moment, before that I had time to save the maid, The Squat Man ript her; and she cried out once with a very dreadful scream, and was suddenly dead in the hands of the Brute-Man.

And my heart made my blood to burn with wrath in mine eyes, so that I had scarce power in that instant to see the Squat Man, as I ran upon him. And the roar of the Diskos filled all the hollow, as I made it to spin, as that it did rage with an anger, and to be glut of the Man.

And the Man came round upon me; and thought, mayhaps, to deal with me, as it had dealt with that poor maid, but not all thatwise, as you must know. And I swung the Diskos, and it did seem to sing and to cry eager in my hands. And I smote at the Squat Man, even as it did leap silent upon me, as a tiger doth leap, making no sound. But I gat not home the blow; for the Man dropt sudden down upon the hands, and the blow went overwards. And the Brute-Man caught me by the legs, to rip me; and I cut quick with the Diskos, and it did have but one monstrous talon left unto it. And immediately, it cast me with the other, half across the hollow, and I fell with mine armour clanging mightily, and the Diskos did ring like a bell.

And by the graciousness of all good things, I was harmed not by that monster throw; but was to my feet in one instant, and had not loosed the Diskos from my hand. And the Beast-Man did be upon me with two quick boundings; and I stood up to the Man, and it made no sound or cry as it came at me; and there did a great froth of brute anger and intent come from the mouth of it, and the teeth came down on each side of the mouth, very great and sharp. And I leaped and smote, so that my blow should come the more speedy, and the Diskos took away the head and the shoulder of the Squat Man; and the dead thing knockt me backward, with the spring that it had made; but it harmed me not greatly. Yet afterward I did know how sore and bruised I did be, in all my body and being. And I came back very swift against the Man; but it did be truly dead and greatly horrid.

And I went from the dead monster, and did go, all heart-shaken, unto the dead maid. And I took the torn body of the maid, very sorrowful, and cast it into the fire-hole.

And I turned me then that I should look unto the cave, that I should know that all did be well with Mine Own, and whether she did have seen the horror, or be gone into a swoon.

And lo! Mine Own did run toward me; and she had in her hand my belt-knife which I did give her, before that time, to be a weapon for her defence. And I perceived that she had come to be mine aid, if that I did need such. And she did be utter pale, yet very steadfast and not seeming to tremble.

And I made to take her from that place; but she went beyond me, and lookt at the monstrous bulk of the Squat Man; and was very silent. And she came back unto me; and still so silent. And she stood before me, and said no word; but my heart knew what she did be thinking; for I am not foolish, to have lacked to know what did be in her heart; though mine effort had not shown itself that way unto me, before that moment.

And I had no pretending of modesty, but received with gladness and a strangeness of humbleness the honour that her eyes did give to me; for, indeed, she did be

so, that she might not give word to her joy of me and her glad respecting, the which is so wondrous good unto the heart of all men that do be loving of a dear and hone t maid.

And she said nothing, neither then nor afterward; but I did be honoured all my life after, when that I did anytime mind me of the way that Mine Own lookt upward at me in those moments.

And after that we had eat and drunk, we went onward again; and made now unto the South-West; for we did heed that we go no more unto the North-West, because that should bring us over-near to The Shine.

And in the fourteenth hour of that day's travel, we came to a part where the Land dipt downward into a broad valley; and surely it did be very dark down there, and did be seeming shallow, yet truly of a great deepness; but we went that way, because that it did be a weary long journey to go around the place where the valley did be.

And the Valley had a different darkness from the gloom that went alway in the olden sea-bed; for the gloom of the sea-bed did be ever of a greyness; but the gloom of this Valley had a greater dark within it; yet did the air seem more clear.

And it was gone now of seventeen hours since last we did sleep; but yet did we be ready to go forward, that we come so quick as maybe out of the dark of that Valley; for there did seem nowheres any fire-hole to make a light; only that in this place and that, there did be a little blue shining, as that there burned a strange gas in this part or that.

Now, in two hours after the time that we did eat, we stopt, both of us, very sudden; for there did be some vague and curious sound in the night. And we went very swift to the earth, that we be hid, and harked. But did hear nothing.

And in a while, we onward again; yet there did be an unease upon our spirits; for our spirits did perceive something afar off in the night; but yet had we no surety in this matter.

And, surely, in that moment that we harked very keen, there did be a sound afar off in the night of the

Land. And the sound was as that something went spinning in the night.

And a very great terror came upon the Maid; for she did know the sound; and the sound was that which did show that one of the great Evil Forces of the Land did approach; and the sound had been known alway in the Lesser Refuge to show this thing. And, indeed, mine own spirit had been half to know that a Power of Evil did come through the night; but yet was the assurance very terrible; for how should I protect Mine Own.

And the spinning came toward us, and was presently in the Valley; and it came swiftly across the dark of the Valley. And my heart was all broken within me, because that there had been happiness with us, but a little time gone; and now there did be our death anigh.

And Mine Own gave me the knife that I had given to her; meaning that I slay her, in the last moment; for she did heed even in that moment that she be not gashed horridly by the terror of the Diskos. And I took the knife. And I kist not Mine Own; but stood there, very shaken and desperate, and gript her fast unto me, scarce heeding the hardness of my gripe; and alway I lookt unto the way of the coming of the Sound. And presently did unbare my wrist where the Capsule did be.

And the sound of the thing Spinning came anigh, across the Valley; and my heart did dull and my spirit go black with my desperateness, because that this thing must be, and because that I could nowhere see hope that I should save Mine Own.

And, of a sudden, the Maid put up her arms, and pulled me downward, and kist me once on the lips; but I wot not whether I kist her; for I did burn with despair and was all adrift in my being. Yet was there a sharp comfort that mine own dying did be so nigh.

And the Maid stood gently against me; so that she did be convenient unto my hand. And afterward I remembered this thing; and do you pray that you be never to have such a matter on your hearts! But,

indeed, there was a wonder in this thing, beside the horror; so that my memory doth be alway knowing of this wonder; and mayhap you do see with me, and love Mine Own also in your hearts.

And in the moment that the Maid stood thus, as I have told, I perceived sudden that there did be a little glowing in the night, and the glowing was pale and horrid. And there was no more any sound of the Spinning; only there did be, as it were, the trunk of a great tree, that did show in the glowing; and the trunk of the tree came toward us across the darkness.

And I turned the Maid from the Tree, and she did flutter a little in my hands, as I did know, scarce-knowing; for she perceived that she did be going to die in that moment. And I had my body thus between the Evil Thing and the Maid. And lo! the Tree came no more anigh to us; but went backward, and the pale glowing did fade, and the Tree no more to be seen.

And I cried unto the Maid, very husky, that we did live; for that the Evil Power was gone off from us; but she answered not, and did be heavy against me. And I held her, and lookt alway about us, lest the Tree come in upon the other side.

And, as I lookt this way and that, I saw naught; and afterward, in a moment, I searched the night above, lest that the Thing come from above. And, behold, I saw that there abode over us a clear light, as it were a clear burning Circle, above us in the night. And my heart did leap with an holy joy and an utter great thankfulness; and I was no more in fear of the Tree; for, in verity, there fought for our souls one of those sweet Powers of Goodness, that did strive ever to stand between the Forces of Evil and the spirit of man; and this matter have I shown to you, before this time.

And concerning this holy Defense, I have thought that it should not, mayhap, to have had so strong a power to save us, if that we had shown an over-weakness and fear, but because that we did rather stand so well as we might to make battle of escape from so dire a Destruction.

And, surely, this doth seem but a sane thinking unto me; but yet without proof, and to be said to you, only

as the shapings of my thoughts. And this the chief end of that happening, that the holy Circle did truly deliver us, and burned through twelve great hours above us; and by this, do I know that the Evil Power hovered anigh, to destroy us, all that while; for, indeed, it doth not be proper of reason to suppose that such an utter wondrous thing did be needlessly over us, save to be a Shield of Great and Lovely Force against a waiting Evil Thing. And surely you do see thiswise with me?

And, truly, so soon as my Spirit and Reason perceived that we did be no more to suffer from the Evil Thing, I remembered that I did know that Mine Own had swooned. And, in verity, you shall mind how that she did face her death so utter sweet and brave, and had given no cry, but made quietly to help me in that dreadful moment, and did stand brave and gentle to the stroke.

And I gat her to come-to unto her life again, and I set the lovely tale very swift to ease her, and surely with love and warmth, and kist her with a great joy. And I showed how I did honour her for her good courage.

And she to weep a little, with the ease come so sudden upon her; and afterward to kiss me upon the lips an hundred times, and to need that she be very safe in mine arms, because that I had meant that I do so dread an office to her. And surely I do wonder whether you perceive all that did be then in her heart.

And the holy light that did be over us, she did watch with a sweetness of awe; and rest did come more great upon her in the heart, as she did learn how sure was the seeming of that Lovely Power to deliver us.

And, presently, we made forward again in the Valley.

Now, in a little while, I felt that the ground did be sloped upward before us a little, and by this thing I saw that I had known aright, for that there did be a ridge that hid the Land somewise over unto the part where I lookt to find the mouth of the Upward Gorge. And we went up this slope at a strong pace, because that I was so eager that I find where we did be in nearness unto the mouth of the Upward Gorge.

And surely, I was something forgetful, in mine eager-

ness, and came somewhat ahead of Mine Own, who did make to hide from me that she did begin to lag, because that her new strength was near gone from her.

And sudden there did be a very dreadful cry, to my back; and I came round in one instant, so quick as a light doth flash; for it was the voice of Mine Own, and all my being did suddenly burn with fear that kindled through me in a moment of thought.

And lo! Mine Own did struggle terribly with a yellow thing which I perceived to be a man with four arms; and the Man had two arms about the Maid, and with two did make to choke her unto death; for she cried out no more.

And I came unto the Man with a quick leaping, and stopt not to pluck the Diskos from my hip; and surely I did be very strong, and mine anger and rage to make me monstrous; for I caught the two upper arms of the Man, and brought them backward in an instant, so fierce and savage, and so wrencht upon them, that I brake them in the shoulders of the Man.

And the Man roared and shriekt, even as a wild and dreadful Beast should cry out, and came round upon me with the two lower arms. And surely it was a mighty and brutish thing, and so broad and bulkt as an ox, and the lower arms were huge and greatly haired, and the fingers of the hands did have the nails grown into horrid talons, as that they should grip very bitter.

And it caught me by the thighs, to rip me upward, as I did fear; but yet this did not be the intent of the Man; for in a moment it caught me round the body; and on the instant, I gat the Man by the great throat, and the throat did be haired, and so great as the neck of a bull. And I strove with mine armoured hands that I choke the Man, and surely I made it to suffer great trouble; yet, I could not harm it in the life.

And so I did be an horrid minute, and fought with the Beast, with no more than the strength of my body; and it was as that an human went with his hands to slay a monster so strong as an horse. And the breath of the Man-Beast came at me, and did sicken me; and

I held the face off from me; for I had died with horror, if that it had come more anigh; and surely the mouth of the Man was small and shaped so that I knew that it did never eat of aught that it did slay; but to drink as a vampire; and in truth, I did mean that I chop the Man to pieces, if that I have chance to the Diskos.

And I did sway this way and that, as we did struggle; and surely it was as that the Man had never made to use the lower arms, save to hold unto prey, the while that it did use the upper arms to strangle, as I do think. For all that weary minute of the fight, the Man made not to loose from me, that it should tear my hands from their grip to the throat; but made vain waggings with the arms that I brake, as that it would use these to the attack; but surely they had no more power to do hurt.

And sudden, it put forth an utter power about my body, so that mine armour did be like to crack; and truly I had died in a moment; but for the strongness of the armour. And the man hugged me thus for an horrid time, the while that I did hold off from me the brutish face, and gript very savage into the haired throat.

And lo! the creature did work slow in the brain, and in the end loost from me, abrupt, and went back with a leap, so that my hands did be ript from the throat of the Beast. And in one instant it did be back unto me, and gave me no moment to free the Diskos. But I made anew to fight, and shaped as I had learned in the Exercises of mine Upbringing; for truly I had been alway deep in practice of such matters. And I slipt from the great hands of the Man, as it did try to take me by the head; and I hit the Man with mine armoured fist, and put a great power and skill to the blow. And I went instant to the side with a swift stepping, and evaded the man, and I smote the Man again, and took him very savage in the neck; but all the while grown very cold and brutal and cruel; for I was set to the slaying. And the Man-Beast came round on me; and lo! I slipt the gripe of the great hands, and my body

and my legs and mine arms did work together unto that last blow; so that I did hit so hard as a great hammer. And I gat the Beast in the throat, and the Beast went backward to the earth, even as it did think to hold me.

And lo! in a moment, I was free, and I pluckt forth the Diskos from my hip. And the Yellow Beast-Man grunted upon the ground; and it rose up again to come at me; and it stood and did grunt, and did seem as that it was gone mazed; for it did make other sounds and an horrid screeching, so that truly, by the way of it, I conceived that it cried out unknown and half-shapen words at me. And in a moment, it came again at me but I cut the head from the Beast-Man, that was in verity an horrid monster, and the Man died, and was quiet upon the earth.

And truly, in that moment, the distress of mine efforts and mine utter tiredness and the ache of the bruises took me; so that I do surely think I rockt as I stood; but yet was my head strong to think and my heart set in anxiousness; for I wotted not how great an hurt had been done upon Mine Own.

And I ran to her, and came to where she did be upon the ground; and surely she was all huddled, and had her hands very piteous to her throat, that did be so pretty. And it did shake me in that moment that she was truly slain; for she was gone so utter still and as that she did be broken unto death.

And I took her hands from her throat, and surely it did be a little torn; yet not to be much, or so that it should loose her her of dear life. And I strove that I steady the trembling of my hands; and I gat free of mine armoured gloves; and made that I feel whether her throat did be deadly hurt; and, in verity, it seemed not so; only that my hands did so shake, because that I was so frightened for Mine Own, and because that I was but new come from the battle; and because of this I had not power of touch to assure me.

I made then that I quieten my breath, which did yet come very full and laboured; and I put mine ear above he heart of the Maid, and lo! her heart did beat, and

the horridness of my fear went from me in a moment.

And I had the scrip from my back very speedy, and some of the water to fizz, and I dashed the water upon her face and upon her throat; and surely there did be a little quivering and an answering of her body.

And I strove with her for a while more; and she came unto her life again; and in the first, she was all a-lack, as you may think; and immediately she began that she remembered, and she then to shake.

And I told her how that the Four-Armed Man was surely dead and could harm her no more; and she then to weep, because that she had been put to such shock and horror, and held by so brutish a thing. But I took her into mine arms, and so she did come presently to an ease; and I perceived in all my being that she was as a little ship that doth lie in harbour; for she did cling and nestle unto me; and did be safe with me in all her heart and body and belief. And surely she was Mine Own, and I to have glory in that knowing.

And presently, I put her from mine arms, to lie; yet so that she might not perceive the body of the Yellow Beast-Man. And I made clean the Diskos, from her sight, and afterward I put on the scrip; and I took the Maid to mine arms again, and had the Diskos in my hand beside her.

And she made protest that she should truly walk; for that I was all a-weary, and she come to her strength again. And, indeed I carried her a certain way, and did then put her down to her feet; and truly her knees did so tremble that she had not stood, let be to walk! And I caught her up again; and I kist her, and I told her that I did be surely her Master, in verity, and she mine own Baby-Slave. And truly you shall not laugh upon me; for I was so human as any; and a man doth talk this way with his maid.

And she did be quiet and sweet and to obey wisely; for she was gone very weak. And thiswise we did go; and I to say loving words, in the first; but afterward I did heed more of my going, now that she was something eased and at rest within mine arms. And I did peer

everywhere about, lest that some other evil thing come outward of the bushes, to have at us ere I did ware. And, truly, the bushes grew here and there in that place, very plentiful, in great clumpings.

And presently I was come to the top part of the ridge; and lo! a great gladness took me, and some amazement; for there did be the lights that did be in the mouth of the Upward Gorge, and they did show me that I was come anigh to that place. Yet had I feared that we were surely a dozen great miles off; and now I to learn that we did be scarce of two or maybe three, as I did judge.

And I told this thing to the Maid; and she rejoiced in mine arms, with a deep and quiet thankfulness. And I set forward then at so good a pace as I might; and I was come into the mouth-part of the Upward Gorge in about an hour; and surely I did be very weary, for it was beyond six and thirty hours that we had gone since last we did sleep; and there had been sore labour and terror to our share in that time, as I have told.

And I turned in the mouth of the Gorge, and told Mine Own, very gentle, that we did take our last look upon that Land. And she askt that I put her down to her feet; and I put her down. And therewith we stood in that place, and mine arm about her; and so did I support the Maid, the while that she lookt silent over the dark of the Land.

And so a time did pass, and I knew that Naani said good-bye forever unto all that she had known of the world in all her life; and she did be whispering a good-bye in her soul unto her Dead.

And presently, I moved a little, to sign that we go downward of the Gorge; and she stayed me one moment, that she look once more over all that Land; and afterward, she submitted, and turned with me, and did break into very bitter sobbing as she did go stumbling beside me; for the sorrow of memory did fill her; and she was truly a very lonesome Maid in that moment, and had come through much dreadfulness.

And in a minute, I stoopt and lifted her; and she

wept in mine arms against mine armour; and I very silent and tender with her; and carried her downward of the Gorge for a great hour more. And presently she was grown calm, and I knew that she slept in mine arms.

And in thiswise we made farewell of that dark Land, and left it unto Eternity.

CHAPTER X

HOMEWARD BY THE SHORE

Now we came presently out of that sad and dreary place that did go inward of the great mountains, and which I have named the Upward Gorge; and we to halt soon between the feet of the mountains, beyond the mouth-part of the Gorge.

And Naani alway to look every way about her, and to breathe very quick, and her eyes to be gone bright with wonder and the seeing of new things, and the coming of freedom from so great a dread.

And she turned, now, and did look upward into the dark of the Gorge, and to spy upon the great mouth thereof, and to be feared then, and must run a greater way downward into the lightness of the Country of the Seas; and to come once more to pause, and to look backward, and with an awe and a relieved soul; and so again to the wonder of the spreaded Country and the great Sea; and did near to laugh and cry in the same moment, with the amazement and gladness and great astonishment that did be upon her. And she to turn constant this way and that, and to be never ceased of looking, and of deep breathings of the wide air; for never in that life had she been in a broad place of light, as you shall have perceived.

And surely we did look about for a flat rock to be for our use, and we came presently to a place nice to our

purpose, that did be yet upward over the Land; and we climbed up on to the rock and sat thereon to have our food and drink.

And as we eat and drank, we did sit very close, and happy; but yet to have a wise looking about anigh to us, so that we be caught by no danger of the Humpt Men, or by any other danger that might be.

And oft did Mine Own speak upon the clear wonder of the air, as it did seem to her; and to me it did seem likewise, that had lived my life also in a Dark Land, as you do know.

And far off, by miles, beyond the feet of the mountain, where went the shore of the sea, upon our left, there was a great mist and steam; and this to be that mist and steam that I did come through on mine outward way; and Naani to ask concerning it, and I to tell her so much as I knew, and how that we must indeed come presently through it, upon our journey.

And she to be in wonder of the volcanoes that did burn in the sea, and in this place and that of the wide Country; and the height and grandness to exalt her, and in the same time to give her a strange humbleness of her mind; so that presently I did take her into mine arms, for I must kiss her, because that she did be so utter a sweet maiden, and lovely with interest and naturalness. And truly she to kiss me in turn; and to make her questionings between her kissings; and this to be because she did pant for a greater knowing of the Country; but also, as I do half to think, because she did be sweetly impudent unto me; and this to be of her joy.

And presently, she to kiss me thrice very passionate, and warm upon the mouth; and immediately to take my shoulders, with her shall hands, that did seem so pretty upon my broadness and upon the metal of the armour. And she to strive thus that she shake me to a speedier answering; and she, all that while, to be full of a dear naughtiness, and to need that she be kist very hard.

And I to answer her; but after mine own fashion, which did be a word between each kiss that I gave to her. And she very quick and naughty to put her hand between our lips; and I then to kiss the palm, that did

be my way, and did be very small and pretty. And she, when I had no thought, to open her fingers very quick, and kiss me through between the fingers, and immediately to shut the fingers, so that I did be stopt from the same.

And afterward, I made her to stand upon the rock, and I set free her hair over her shoulders; and I took then the boots from her, so that her little feet did show bare and pretty. And she, at the first, half to refuse me; but afterward to stand very dear and obedient that I should have my way with her; and to be a little shy, and the more pretty because of her sweet blushings.

And she then to want to be more sedate and to be set down upon the rock; and she to make me to turn around, so that she should come at the pouch, which did be upon my back.

And she gat thence the comb that was a fitment, and did comb her pretty hair, and I to sit and talk with her, and to jest, with a heart that did be so light as it had not been for a great while; for though I did dread the Humpt Men and the monstrous animals of the Country of Seas, I had not any abiding horror of aught that I had seen in that Country; for there seemed a naturalness in all things, so that I did have no loathing; neither any fear of an Evil Force.

And presently, when that the Maid had combed her hair, she to bind it upon her head; but I to ask that she leave it upon her shoulders, because that it did be so pretty; and she to smile at me, and to be happy to my pleasuring.

Now we did be truly sedate, and to set our gear together; and I to put the boots upon the maid; and afterward we to begin again to journey downward into the Country of the Seas.

And when we had gone a while, we to begin to hear the far hissing of the steam and the noise of the upward burstings of waters that did boil; and the sound to be very strange; but I to have heard it before, as you do know; so that it to trouble me the less than the Maid. And I to assure her; and she to come nigh to me, and thiswise we to enter presently into the steam.

And we went then for more than three hours; and I had the Maid to my back, that I should be the first; and this I did, that she have no danger to walk into a boiling pool in the mazingness of the steam, which was everywhere. And I to be something guided in my path by the shore of the sea which did be unto our left alway; only that we go so close that we near into the water.

And, truly, the sea to seem to boil in parts, and there to be hot pools in all places; so that who should say with ease whether we did go by one of the great hot pools or by the true sea. And this, our constant puzzle, shall be likewise to you; and you to perceive how that we did go utter wary.

And about us from every part there did come the strange burstings and shriekings and whistlings of the boil of the waters breaking upward from the deep world. And odd whiles the sounds to be as of great monsters and the earth to shake under us; and other-whiles there to be a hush and only the steam about us, and somewhere in the distance and uncertainness a low piping of some steam cranny, very strange and lonesome-sounding.

And the Maid now to perceive the trees, which did be in great forests unto our right hand, while that the shore of the sea did go alway upon our left. And she to be utter in wonder of the trees; and to need that she pluck branches, and smell of them and look at each leaf; and so to be all stirred; for never in that life did she to have seen such a matter as those great trees did be; but yet to be all stirred by vague memories that did seem no more than dreams. And you to think but a moment, and to perceive how the thing did be with her; and you to have been likewise stirred, if that you did be so strangely waked in a corner part of the heart; though but a little matter to wake you.

And when we did go thiswise for seven good hours, we were come nigh opposed to the bright-burning fire-hill that did be offward in the sea, and had made me a warm light in that time when I did sleep in the tree, as you do remember. And truly, as I shall here mind you, we did be past seven hours coming to this place, from the part

where the steam did be ; yet had I gone that space upon the outward way at a speed that was greater ; but truly I might not set so great a pace to the Maid, save, mayhap, odd whiles ; and this thing I beg that you have alway in your mind, and so to understand why that we did be oft long upon this part of the journey and that, by compare with mine outward going.

And, in verity, I had set off our hour for food, because that I saw we did come nigh to the place where the tree did be ; and I to know that the Maid should like to eat and drink anigh to that place, and to know that I did sleep there.

And surely I took her to the tree, and when that I told her, she to beg me that I indulge her and that we go upward to that branch where I did sleep, and there to eat our tablets.

And I to be willing, and to enter into her wishing ; for, indeed, there was no danger in the climb, and I to go alway below her, so that I could be surety for her safeness. And we came up to the great branch ; and she to make how we should sit, and I to have to show just where I did lie, and she to look very close, and to see that my weight had surely marked the hardness of the armour upon the bark ; and she then to be upon that branch alone, as she did eat and drink ; and to look outward at the light from the fire-hill, and to be very husht, and to think, and I not to disturb her with speech.

And when she did be done, she gat from the branch, and kist the place where I did lie ; and lo ! in a moment a thought came to her, and she drew her knife, and cut out a piece of the bark, and put it into her breast to be for a keepsake ; and so to seem somewise contented.

And truly, I told her about the great beast, when we were come down again to the earth ; and she to cry out and to show me that there did be yet the mark where the belly of the monstrous beast did brush upon the earth, as it ran, and moreover the broken places of the foot-marks ; and she by this to see how great a beast it did be ; but yet did it be a little thing beside the Slug ;

only that it did be a thing of horn and hardness of skin, as you have perceived.

Now we went onward then to our journeying; and I to make to carry the Maid, as ever, after that she had walked twelve hours, though she did walk thirteen hours this time as you have seen. And she to say that she go now upon her own feet through the next six hours, and so to ease me from the labour that did be needful to carry her.

But I to know how that she did be like to be all gone of her strength thiswise, in but a day or two, and we to make the better speed, if that I keep to my way, and to have her to walk twelve hours of every journey, and afterward to come into mine arms; for, truly, she did be bred less hardy than I, as you shall think from all that I have told concerning the Peoples of the Lesser Pyramid; and moreover she was yet something weakened, as I did think, by the dreadful month of her lonesomeness and escapings, before that I was come to succour her.

And truly, as I did carry her, the Maid did make remark of her wonderment concerning me, in that I did be so hard of my body and set in the determination of my mind. And, in verity, I did be exceeding strong and of great hardness of body; and mayhap my will did be somewhat this way also, else do I think I had never borne to come unto Mine Own through so much desolation. And I to smile very happy upon her; for I did love that I was so strong, and very truly in delight that Mine Own Maid did take gladness in this thing. And you to mind how you did be also in the love-days; and so to have nice understanding of my naturalness and human pride.

Now, as I set the Maid again comfortable, it seemed to me that she was something tender; and sudden it came to me that mayhap the armour to be very hard and painful unto her; and I to ask this thing of her, in a moment; and she to see that I would not be put off; and so to tell me. And, truly, I was utter angered with myself; and somewise also with her, in that she did not waken mine unthinkingness to this thing.

And I set her instant to the earth, and made her to bare her shoulders to me; and truly they did be much bruised where that she had lain so oft in mine arms, against the hardness of mine armour.

And I to be so angered that I near shook her, and she to see how I did be, and that she did be nigh to be shaken, because that I was grown so angry that she should let herself come to this foolish hurt, that yet I did know was very dear unto her secret heart. And, in truth, she put up her lips to me, very sudden, and with a strange naughtiness, that she have her own way with me to tempt me from mine anger, that yet she did half to like. And, in verity, I near slapt her then upon her pretty shoulders, but that she ceased from her tempting of me; and instead she turned her shoulders to me, even as a child, that I button her garment for her.

And surely, when I had buttoned her garment, she came round unto me, and closed her hand, so that it did be a little fist, even as I did love her to do, because that it was so small beside my great hand.

And she slipt her shut hand into mine; and surely I let it stay within, very quiet, and made not to close upon it, as I did wont. And the Maid did move her hand around in mine, that she make me to take notice upon her, and to grasp her little fist. Yet I did be very stern, for I was truly angered; and neither did I put her hand from mine, nor made to hold it; but only to let it bide; yet, truly, I to be something stirred in the heart-part by her pretty ways.

And in a little while, she took her hand from out of mine, and did have daring to be cold unto me. And mine anger then to be quaintly renewed, and to think that she did well need to be whipt. And she made a naughty and foolish impudence upon that which I said to her; so that presently I did say that she did need such as should make her to heed her manners; but yet, as you shall conceive, I to know inwardly all that time how that even this true naughtiness did not stir me to proper anger; but more that it made me masterful and to lack not that I make her to know truly that I did be her Master; and in the same time to be strangely touched in a very deep and secret place of

my heart. And truly love doth have strange actings upon my heart.

And she to hark very quiet and humble to my counsellings; and in the end did be so strangely husht that I lookt down to where her pretty face did be hid against mine armour, as she did love to do, when that I did be those odd whiles a little stern with her. And I held her face away from mine armour; and surely she did be smiling, very quiet and naughty; so that I perceived that she did be good only for that time, and did be like to show again this wrongful and impudent spirit. Yet I not then to be in trouble of the future; but to hope only that I do wisely, if that she show again this waywardness. And, truly, I to perceive now that I did be very young; but, anywise, as you do know, I to act alway from the natural telling of my heart.

And I shook Naani a little, for this naughty spirit which did not be gone from her. For I perceived that my manhood had but stirred the woman in her to that strange quick humbleness that had seemed to be a quenching of her wayward unwisdom; and truly it had not been stilled, but only sunken for a little moment in the uprising of her dear nature, which had responded unto me.

And the Maid to look at me from under her lids, as I did shake her with gentleness; and I to know that Mine Own did be a wondrous maiden, full of all life and spirit, and to be held wisely and to be loosed wisely, all as did be for the best to bring out the uttermost of her goodness which did be in all her being, and to be very lovely; and to make me feel as that I did be a giant that held a white flower very tender; but I to feel also that I did be her Master. And this mayhap you to understand, if that you look into your hearts.

Now I to shake the Maid very gentle, as I have said, and with much that did be of play, but in the same wise there to be also somewhat of tender reproof. And surely, that naughty maid to spring very light upon her toes, and had kist me sudden and dainty upon the mouth, before that I did wot.

And I to put mine arm about her, and to give her a little hug; and immediately then to matters that did

be practical; for I was eager to have come across that stony part of the journey, that did be before us, as you do know, before that we look for a place for our slumber. And this eagerness of haste to be, because of the great bird things which I had seen to go bounding over that waste, when that I was upon mine outward way.

And, surely, after that I had thought a little moment, I bid the Maid that she dress in her torn garments, so that these should be over the top of the armour-suit, and thiswise to make a soft thickness upon the top of the armour-suit, that should act for a cushion between mine armour and her dear body.

And she, as I could know, to be strangely in love that her gentle body be bruised by the hardness of mine armour; and if this might not be, she to be not wishful that she wear her torn clothing upon her neat suit and so to seem careless and to lack to be dainty in mine eyes; for, indeed, she did be alway to wash herself and to make tidiness; and she to have a way now that she did set the armour-suit upon her, that had it to seem different, and she to have set a little sprig from the trees upon her breast, and in her girdle, and so to seem the more of a maid; and surely a man doth know and love these things; but not alway to have full knowing how that they be done. And, indeed, you to be likewise with me in this thing. And we all to think we know, but somewise to be just a-lack when that it doth come to the proof.

And, in verity, the Maid to find a way that she be eased of the hardness of the armour; and I to have come to the same thing in the same moment; but truly I do think she had been able to think upon it a long while, if that she had been so desired.

And truly, this was but that I fold the cloak very thick across mine arms and breast, and to take her then into the little nest that did be prepared.

And once, when that I had carried her for three hours, she to ask me that I kiss her; and truly I did kiss her, very gentle and with reverence, because that my heart did understand the holiness that did be in her heart in that moment.

And, surely, as I kist her, she to kiss me very tender;

and I to know that some olden memory did be like to stir in her. And in a moment, she to take her lips from mine, where she had let them to nestle very light, and did whisper mine olden love-name; and I then to look at her, and her eyes to shine as the olden stars that did shine in the olden summers.

And I to be too shaken even that I kiss her. But she to put her arms about my neck, and to look steadfast into mine eyes. And immediately, after that she had lookt awhile, and I to have ceased from walking, she to put her hands upon each side of my face, within the metal of mine head-gear, where the guards did come down at the sides; and she to kiss me very sober upon the lips; but yet to mean utter by that kiss. And I not to return the kiss; for I saw that it did not be her need.

Now, as we went forward upon our journeying, I perceived that the Maid had a wayward air; and truly, I thought that she did have her heart all set toward naughtiness and mischief; and in the same moment that I was in this belief, I did know in mine understanding that this did spring from the workings of my nature upon the nature of Mine Own Maiden.

And Naani to walk, in the first, beside me, and to have no word for me, because that she did be so filled with the stirrings of her naughtiness, that did be in the same moment very sweet unto me, and yet to waken all that did be masterful within me. And she to be that she did know, and to delight, in her secret heart that she waken that which did be masterful in me; but yet in the same moment to be strong determined that she be not mastered by me. And surely this to seem contrarywise in the words; but to be clear to the heart, if indeed you have ever been loved by a dear maid of an high spirit.

And above all this, the Maid did be filled with a love for me, that did beat and dance in all her being; and this in truth to overweigh all; but yet from this same thing her dainty naughtiness to be born, because, as I did say, my manhood to stir all her nature up-wise in sweet trouble that did be half of rebellion, and half that she did ache that she be close unto me in mine arms.

And sudden, I to know that Naani did change from her low singing unto an olden air that had surely not been heard in all that eternity. And in verity, for a little while, I not to know why that it did so shake all my heart; nor what it did be; nor whether that I had truly heard it before, or only to think so.

And, surely, it did be as that the silence of the olden moonlit world did steal all about me; and sudden, I to know that the Maid did sing an olden love-song of the olden world, and to go halting a little as she sang, because that the words did steal something odd-wise through the far veils of her memory, even as a song doth come backward out of dreams.

And surely, I did be there, all shaken unto the seeing of visions, as it did seem; so that the Land about me to have grown half as that it did lack that it be real unto my sight, because that I lookt inward unto Lands that did be of Memory. And lo! in a moment this to go; and I to be in that Country of the Seas, and to look newly unto Naani, and she to go as I have told; and there to be the lonesome trees and the rocks in all parts for a great way about.

And sudden, as I lookt at Mine Own, she to come round unto me, and she held out her arms, and did gaze at me with such a love, as that she were transfigured, and to need strangely that she be in mine arms; and surely, I to an holy need that I have her unto me, because that, after all, there did be no wonder so great as that wonder, that when all did be said I did have Mine Own, after that all Eternity had nigh past.

And, in verity, we ran each to the other, and did be silent, because that there was no speech of words by which we could say aught of all that did be in our hearts. And truly you to be with me in understanding; for you too, mayhap, to have suffered thiswise of dumbness; even if that it hath not been so great. But yet to make you to know.

And presently, we grew quiet in the spirit; and Mine Own to come back again to her joyousness, and to go beside by me, as we made forward.

And presently, Naani to begin that she look at me

with dear impudences again, that did be very sweet unto me; but yet to be like to lead unto defyings.

Now, in a while, we past a basin of rock, in a place among the trees; and there was a warm spring bubbling in the rock, and the basin to be full of water, very warm and with some smelling of chemistry.

And the Maid told me that she would wash, and I to think it a good place for that end. And when I had tasted the water, I found that it did seem smooth and proper for our intent, as that there did be a sooth of an alkali in it.

And truly we washed, and after that I was done, the Maid bid me that I turn my back; and I to do this, and she to mock me very naughty whilst that I could not see her, and to seem very quiet; for indeed, I heard no splashings of water, though I stood off from her a long while, and she alway to say naughty things unto me, as that she did mind truly to have me angered; for, indeed, she did have a plain intent that she mock at me, and to ease not her wit.

And surely. after that I had stood a great while, I askt the Maid when that she did be like to be done; but she to say that she was nowise ended of her toilets. And I knew very sudden that she made foolishness upon me also in this matter; and I turned upon her, and lo! she did be sitting upon a little rock, very sedate, even as when she had bid me turn from her; and to have made no more forward, but only to have been there at ease, that she keep me turned away to please her naughty mood, and all the while have a double liberty to have impudence upon me.

And, in verity, I did be a little angered; but scarce that I did know it; for I did love her very great, and was stirred inwardly with her dearness and that she did look just that-wise that I knew not whether I to need to kiss her, or to shake her; and truly, how should I know; for my heart did ache that I have her to mine arms; but my brain to say that she did go over-far in the joke; and truly you to see that I did not be unreasonable, neither to be lacking of grace; for indeed I do think that I was swayed all-ways, because that I saw all the dear way that her pretty nature did work;

and to conceive of her mood and to understand and be stirred; but yet to shape a little in my manhood unto hardening, and in my judgment unto sternness.

Yet, truly, I scolded Mine Own with no more than a little jesting, and did be nice and gentle with her, because she did be so dear, and I to know just-wise her mood and the cause and working of it.

And I told her that I did love her, and that she hasten now and let us again to the journey. But, indeed, she only to make a face at me, so that I did be near like to shake her unto sedateness. And she then to be both merry, and a rogue, as we do say, and to stop her ears and again to sing very gleeful; and all so that she might not hear aught that I said. And surely she lookt a very dainty Rebellious One.

And I went then straightway to her, and took her hands from her ears; and I kist her pretty ears very gentle that I not to deafen her. And I kist her lips as she did sing; and afterward shook her, that she be not such a sweet Torment. But this to have no success that way; for she only to put out her toes to be kist; for her foot-gear was off from her feet. And indeed, I laughed, even as I made to frown; and truly I kist her pretty toes, and tried then to coax her to go forward something speedy with her hair, and to be ready to the journey. But she only to sing, and to refuse to be sedate.

And, in verity, in the end, I caught her up in mine arms, and had her bundle in my hand, and so went off with her very sudden, with her hair all loose upon me in a lovely and soft shining, and her feet bare as they did be.

And this action I made, because that I was grown truly a little stern with Mine Own; for, indeed, she did half to need that she be whipt unto properness, as you shall think, that have seen how she did be thiswise only because that her nature did be stirred strangely, and her Womanhood and her Maidenhood to be all unto war, and in part to make a rebellion against me that she did know glad to be her true Master; but yet she to be thus, even though she did be so glad.

And this to act so that she did be in the same moment

both sweet and wise and yet to show a dainty foolishness and a true naughtiness that did make me to feel somewhat of a real anger; but yet did have me to know that all my being did be stirred by her; so that I did think with one thought that she did be very foolish, and with another that she did be lovely wayward.

Now, when that I took the Maid up so quick, and made off with her, she to give a little gasp and to submit to me with a quick humbleness; but immediately, she to regain her courage, and to be outraged of me. But, indeed, I took no heed, only that I was like to shake her; and did know also that her hair did be wondrous pretty upon mine armour. And she soon to lie very quiet and easy in mine arms, and to be demure.

And I to have a half knowledge of somewhat amiss; but yet to have no sureness, neither to think much upon this vague feeling.

And when that I had gone a good while, she to put up her lips to be kist; and I to kiss her very loving, for she was so dear. And she then to say, very ordinary like, that I should do wisely now if that I went back for her foot-gear, which truly I had lacked thought to notice, when that I did pick up the Maid.

And I saw that she had known this thing all that while, and had made that mile of carrying all a waste and a foolishness, because of the naughty rebellion which did be in her. And lo! I set her instant to the ground; and she gave out a little cry as she saw that I did be gone somewise hard and stern with her.

And indeed I pulled a small branch from a tree that did be near, to be for a switch as you shall whip a boy with; and I held her with my left hand, and in verity I laid the switch thrice very sharp across her pretty shoulders, that she know all that she did need to know. And she seeming to be ceased in a moment from her perverseness, and did nestle very quick unto me, that had whipt her; and did need that she be wondrous nigh unto me. And, truly, how shall even a young man flog such an one.

And the Maid to be very husht against mine armour, and to resist that I look into her face that did be prest so anigh me. But presently, I used a little and gentle

force, and so to look into her face something sudden. And truly, that One did be smiling very naughty and dainty to herself; so that I perceived that I had not truly whipt her enough; but yet I could harden my heart no more at that time; for, in verity, there doth be a strange half-pain in the bosom, if that you have to flog a maid that doth be utter thine, and this to the despite that there hath been—as then—no properness of anger to have for an after self-reproach.

And surely, I to have done this thing only of a stern intent and steadfastness, that I steady Mine Own Maid unto wisdom; but yet to have been helpt by a little anger, because of the thing that she had done. Yet, alway, my love did be so strong, that mine anger never to have aught of bitterness, as you shall have seen, and to understand.

And we went back then for the foot-gear of the Maid; and she to be very husht in mine arms; but yet, as I perceived, not to be quiet, of an humble little heart, but only of the chance that her nature did be stirred that way for the while.

And truly, when we were gone back, the foot-gear did be there to the side of the pool, and the Maid gat shod very speedy, and would have no aid; and afterward did up her hair very tight upon her head, to have it utter from my sight; and this to be for a perverseness; or she knew that I did love to see it pretty upon her shoulders, or if that she must do it, that she do it up very loose and nice; and truly you to know how I mean; only that I have no skill of such matters; but yet a good taste to admirings, if that the thing be aright.

And I to say nothing, as I looked at her; and she presently to make a quick glance unto me, to see why I did say naught. And I shook my head, smiling at her waywardness; but she to look away from me, and to seem to be set to fresh naughtiness.

Now we went forward then upon our journey; and alway the Maid to walk offward from me; but yet to have no other impudence, neither to sing.

And I to go kindly with her; but yet to think that she did lack somewhat to know that I did be truly her Master; and I to wonder a little whether she did know

proper that my gentleness with her did be not of weakness, but born of understanding and love, and the more proof that I did be fit to possess and to guide her.

Now, presently, as I thought upon the matter, I saw that I do well that I take no heed of Mine Own; but to let her to come to a natural end of this naughtiness, that did be, in the same time, both pretty and a little foolish; so that in half I condemned it and in half I was stirred; and alway I loved the Maid very dear, and had a good understanding; and there to be also an interest in my heart at this new side that she did be showing. And also, she to stir me odd whiles unto masterfulness; and so you to know pretty well how it did be with me in the matter.

Now, surely, I found this plan, that I attend not to the Maid, to have something of success; for I knew presently that she did look upward at me, slyly, from under her pretty eyelashes; and after, to be demure in a moment; and this to go forward for a while; yet I to show no heed.

And in a while, I saw that she gave attention to her garments, in the way of nattiness; and afterward, she took down her hair, and made it up then very loose and pretty upon her head; so that she did be very lovely, and to tempt mine eyes that they look alway at her. But, indeed, I did make as that I had no heed that the Maid did shape her hair different upon her head.

And she very soon then to speak, and to have the lesser gear together, and to make that she attract me. But truly, I was very nice with her; yet to keep her now a little off from me in the spirit; and so to teach her that-wise, that she was somewhat of a dear naughty maid; but also, as I do think, I was this way, because that in part I would tease her, in great love of her prettiness and her makings up to me; and so maybe even that I make her to be the more defying of me. And this to be as that I also lacked somewhat of reason; for I did strangely that I think that she need to be whipt, and in the same time that I go to make her the more deserving of the same.

Yet, this to be the truth, as I know it; and surely to be the natural waywardness of love. But yet, there

did be also in the backward part of my wisdom, an intent that I be wise and careful with Mine Own; and I surely to have no full realisings that I did be like to set her further unto perverseness than yet she did be.

Now, after that I had shown well that I lacked to heed the Maid, I found that I did be looking oft at her; and she to be so dear and pretty, and to be all husht, that truly I could not bear that I be longer silent to her advancements.

And I ceased then from pretending, and would have had her into mine arms; but she to be now in sweet dignity, and to keep me off with very sober graces. And because of this, I to feel someway that I did be someway in blame; and surely, now that I consider it, I can see that I was something acted upon, even as had been the Maid; and so we two to be; and a most human pair, as you to say; and somewhat both a-lack; but indeed, we did be very wholesome, and in utter love each of the other; and mayhap both then to perceive something of the sweet foolishness within us that did be as yeast a-work in us; for I thought that Naani did smile a little to herself. But, surely, this clear-seeing, to be but for an odd time; and afterward we each again to earnestness in our way with the other; but alway, even when we did make to show indifference, we to be something troubled inwardly with sweet flashings of our bewildered natures.

And surely she did seem so utter sweet in this new way of naughtiness; but yet I did think, odd whiles, that I should like to shake her unto dear humbleness and her usual way.

And in the twelfth hour, we made halt again, and had our food and our drink; and the Maid to serve me very clever and quiet, as that I did be her Lord, and she an husht slave. And I saw that she made a constant and naughty mock upon me; and truly, as I did half think, she to need that she be in care that I not treat her sternly, as shall a slave-master, and to give her that which she did ask for so mute and impudent. But alway she did stir me mightily to have her to mine arms, and to love her very dear.

And presently, we did be again to our way; and to be yet silent; so that I scarce knew whether to have

patience with Mine Own, or whether that I take her and speak seriously with her to cease this play, which did begin a little to dispirit me somewhat strangely.

And in the end I went over to her, as we did walk and I put mine arm about her, and she to yield to me without word, and to hark very quiet to my speech of reasoning and gentle sayings, and to hide whether she did be stirred inwardly, or not; though, indeed, my spirit to know that her spirit did never be afar off from mine in all deep matters; but only this thing to be to the top, and to set somewhat between us that did be both a sweetness and a trouble.

And alway, as I talked with the Maid, I saw that she did make naughtily to act as that I did be a slave-master, and she but a chattel to me; for she to be husht before me, and neither to yield her slender body willing to mine arm, nor to resist me; but only to be still, as that she had no saying in this matter; and as that I was like to beat her at my pleasure, or to withhold my hand, all as might chance to be my desire.

And I saw that she would not cease from this perverseness, but made a dumb and naughty and hidden mock upon me, very dainty and constant, and scarce to be truly perceived, save by the inward sense. And truly, I grew something angered afresh, and to feel that she did need that she be shaken so stern that she come unto the reality that I did be her man and natural master; yet alway in love.

And surely I loosed her then, and went off a pace to her side; and we again to go forward thiswise; yet she soon to have a greater distance between us, which she made very quiet and natural; but, indeed, I saw what she did.

And alway as we journeyed, there did seem a great stillness in all the Country near about; and afar off the low mutter of the Great Fire-Hills, in this place and that, and a drowse as of life and warmth about us, and everywhere the air very rich and plentiful.

Now when that the eighteenth hour did be proper come, we to be anigh to the great Hills, and there to seem nowise any danger of falling fire, so that I sought about for a place for our slumber.

And I found a cave in the side of a big rock; and the cave was dry and comfortable, and had the mouth about a score feet above the earth. And when that I had climbed and lookt well into the cave, I gave the Maid an help, and had her safe into that place; and she then to prepare the tablets and the water, the while that I brought up a boulder from below, to set very light balanced in the mouth of the cave. And this I meant for a signal to fall, if that any creature should climb upward into the cave, while that we did sleep. And surely, you to know this plan; for I did it before, as you to have learned.

And the Maid sat near to me, and eat her tablets very quiet and with a demure naughtiness; but yet to be also in wonder, and to gaze outward at the Great Fire-Hills, and to be in awe, as I did know.

And I put my half-anger and my play from me, and told her of mine outward journeying, and how I did go by these same mighty Fire-Hills, that did seem as mighty torches to light me in my search, and to have held a new strangeness and wonder over my path.

And she still to be silent, but yet to look at me twice or thrice with a very dear and loving way; though she did hide her eyes in a moment, when that she saw that I perceived her.

And soon the Maid spread the cloak for our sleep; and while that she did this, I lookt well about for any creature that might be anigh; and I had an especial thought unto the Humpt Men; but, indeed, there was naught living, unto my sight, and nowhere did I see anything to put me in fear for our lives.

And truly I had a great viewing from that place; for we did be in an upward rock that stood in a high part, and the cave to be twenty good feet aloft, as I have told; so that all made to set us in a lofty place.

And the cave to look toward the two Mountains that did rise upward no more than twelve good miles off from us, as I do think; and the Country between to be somewise as a mighty park; for it was spread much about the feet of the Great Fire-Hills, and did be bare in this place and that, as that rock did make the earth naked there, or the falling of some later fire to have

wrought thus. And between the bare parts, there went strange and romantic woods, seen mistily; and in parts the gleaming of waters, as that hot lakes did be half shown among the broken forests.

And by this, I was done looking, and turned me about, and so did find that Mine Own did stand silent, and waited that I come to my slumber. And surely, I lookt at her; but she did have her lids something downward, when that she saw me turn; and so in the end, I said naught, but went to my sleep, and had the Diskos very handy, as ever, beside me.

And I then to know that Mine Own did lie down beside me, to my back, as alway; and this to gladden me, as you shall think; for I perceived afresh how thin did be the crust of her naughtiness; and I to be alway stirred and touched in the heart by her loving naturalness, that did need alway that she be near to me, save when she did play this naughtiness upon me along the way.

And I saw that she had no mind to be perverse whilst that I did slumber; but must now be nigh unto me, and quietly loving; though nowise truly ceased from her naughty acting that I did be as an hard slave master, because that I had whipt her; yet she to have somewhat a truce with me, as my heart did know. But, indeed, she not to kiss me good-night upon the mouth, in her dear usual and sober fashion.

And surely I did lie awhile, and pondered upon the Maid and upon all her ways; and I perceived that she kist me not, only because that she did not be able to break utter from her perverseness, that did come from the stirring of her nature. And truly, I did love her, and was half minded that I turn about to her, and take her a moment into mine arms; but yet to abide from this, because that I was set that I wait awhile, and to bring her to me thiswise, mayhaps.

And presently, I knew that the Maid kist mine armour, very quiet and shy, because that she must kiss me; yet to be intent that I have no knowledge of this pretty act. But, indeed, I did know in all my being, and did be newly tender unto her; yet to say naught, and to wait.

And thus I knew presently that her breathing did go

easy, so that I perceived that she was all content and gone over unto slumber, somewise as a little child that doth be weary, and doth sleep without care, and with happy assurance.

And, in verity, did a man ever to have so sweet and gentle a maid, that did be in the same time so troublous and perverse.

And I to lie yet awhile, and to note the constant tremble and shake of the rock that did be under us; and this to be alway thus as I did lie, and to be the more plain, because that I did be quiet in thought. And this, as I conceived, did come from the earth-shaking that was made by the inward fire of the world, the which did make a vague trouble in all that part of the Land.

And then in a little, I was gone over into sleep, and waked not for seven good hours; and then to hear the fizzing of the water, very brisk and cheerful, and so to have mine eyes open in a moment, and to know by my time-keeper or dial, that was somewhat like to a watch of this age, that I had slumbered through seven good hours. But this to be learned after that I had lookt to see whether Mine Own did be well, and whether that the boulder did balance in the mouth-part of the cave.

And surely, there did be nothing in harm; for the boulder was there, as I did put it; and the Maid a little off from me, and did make ready the water and the tablets, that we eat before our journeying.

And I rose then, and in the same moment I did know that my mouth had been kist whilst that I slept; and the knowing to come to me vague, as that I had been kist in my dreams.

And I lookt over toward the Maid; but she to have her lids something down upon her eyes and to seem very demure; so that I saw her naughtiness was come again upon her. Yet, truly, I could not bear that I not to have her into mine arms; for, indeed, her perverseness did seem as that she did the more tempt me unto her. And thus I came to her in a moment; but she neither to resist me, nor to give herself unto me; but only to be still in mine arms, and to do no more than submit very quiet.

And because of this, I loost her unkist, and was silent,

and a little to be angered, even whilst that my heart perceived the way of the working of her heart. Yet truly I ached now that she come back to her dear natural fashion.

And I eat my tablets and drank some of the water; and the Maid to do likewise.

And afterward, I lookt well from the mouth of the cave; but did nowhere see aught to put me in trouble for our safety, though, truly, as presently I saw, there went an herd of strange creatures afar off in the North-westward part, which did be that way of the Country beyond the feet of the mountains, toward the In-Land.

Now, when that I was something assured of the safeness of the way, I gat the Diskos to my hip and the Maid to have the scrip and the pouch ready to my back, and her bundle to her hand; and so all to be ready.

And I went downward from the cave, when that I was girt, and gave aid to Mine Own; and so to be soon upon the journey.

And alway as we did go, there were signs of inward life and forces; so that we but to stand quiet to feel that the earth did tremble gently in many parts.

And presently there sounded for a great while a low and dull booming sound; and this we found to be from a place amid certain great rocks toward the mountains; for there came thence a mighty up-spouting of boiling water, that went so high as an hundred feet, and oft to be thrice so high, and belched a great steam; and there went up in the jet of the water, a great rock, that was so big as an house, and did dance and play in the might of the water, as that it had been no more than a thing very light and easy. And when that the water fell, as it did oft, the rock to go downward with the dull booming that we did hear.

And I minded how that I had heard the booming upon mine outward way; but had been then something more to the shore, so that it had been less plain to mine ears as you shall suppose; neither had it been then to my sight, as now it did be to us because that we were come mayhap the half of a mile more toward the In-Land of the Country.

And truly, we lookt awhile at this huge great fountain and up-boiling, and came nearer unto it; but yet to be a large space off, because of the way that it did throw out a spattering of small stones odd whiles. And surely the thing did cough and roar in the deep earth, and anon to gruntle gently and to sob and gurgle; and lo! to come forth in a moment with a bellow, very hollow and strange, and the great rock to go spinning upward, and all a-shine in the light from the volcanoes, and was so round as a monstrous ball, and polished by the fret of the waters, so that I saw it had surely danced in the great jet through a weary time.

And anon the jet to cease and to go downward with a great souching and thundering of waters, and the dancing rock to fall downward from that height which did show very huge, now that we did be come so near. And the rock surely to fall backward into some deep pit, whence came the waters, and as it fell, there was again the dull booming. But why the rock brake not, I could not perceive, save that it did alway fall into a boiling up of waters, and had no hurt from the rock of the place whence it was come.

And the Maid and I both to have stood a while, that we stare at this thing; for it did be more strange than I have made you to know; but now I did make to our journey again, and did think the Maid followed; but lo! in a moment, when that I lookt, she was to my back, and went toward the great boiling fountain. Then I stopt very swift, and called to her; but she did take no heed of me, and went onward very naughty, unto the danger of the great boil of the Jet, and the constant flying out of the stones, that you do know.

Now, even as I stood and lookt, the Maid drew nigh to the place where the water did thunder; and the Jet in that moment to bellow, so that I knew it came upward again. And I ran then after the Maid, and she to see me, and began likewise to run from me toward the monstrous fountain; and surely I did think that I had done well if that I had whipt or beat her proper before this time; for truly it did be as that her naughtiness had gone nigh unto somewhat that did be near to a wayward madness, so that as I did perceive all her nature did surely

work in her toward some deed that should be for regret; and this to come, because that she did be something pusht from her dear balance by her loving, and by the acting of my manhood upon her, so that her nature both to be in rebellion against me and to need me, and all in the same time. And this way, she to be in an inward turmol, and to be ready foolishly that she put in danger her beloved life, if only thereby she to make me something adrift, and in the seam moment to have some ease of her perverseness. And, in verity, you to know all this, because that I have shown the working of her heart to you before this time.

Now, I caught the Maid among the great rocks, which did stand all about; and before her there did be a monstrous pit whence came the upbursting of the water; and the water to go upward before our faces in a mighty column, so that it did be as that a sea shot up on end, into a pillar of living water, and went upward forever, as it did seem in that moment. And how we should be saved, I knew not, for the water did be as that it overhung us, and should come down upon us and smother us in one moment, forever. And the roar was in our ears and shook all the air of that place with sound, as of an harsh and dreadful thunder; and there was scalding of beaten water, as fine as an haze, all about us.

And I had the Maid in one instant into mine arms, and I ran very swift, with a fierce running, that I have her away speedy, and so made forlorn trial that I save her life. And lo! as I went from under that huge and dreadful overhang of the great waters, there came downward from the height a great stone that had been cast by the Jet, and it burst upon the rock to my back, and certain of the flinders did strike and ring upon mine armour, and made me to stagger as I ran. But I held the Maid crowded safe against my breast, and she did not be hurt; and truly I was yet able to run, and did save Mine Own, and brought her out from under that grim Spouting.

And I put the Maid down then to her feet; and she not to know how near that she had given us to death, neither of the way that the fragments did strike me; for she laughed very naughty and gleeful. But truly I

laughed not; for my heart had been nigh husht with terror for her; so that I did be yet sick in my spirit, and mayhap also something shaken by the blows that I gat from the broken stone.

And, in verity, I to have meant that I flog her, very sharp, if that there be no other way that I might bring her to reason; for, in surety, as you to see, she to be acting so wild as a child, and so unreasoning as only a Maid-in-love; and I to know that she did have to be brought back from this way of spirit, even though I have to hurt her pretty body, that I bring her again to her dear natural wiseness.

Yet, indeed, I could not whip her then, because that she did laugh so joyous, though with a naughty heart, and did look so wondrous dainty, so that even her defyings did but seem that which my heart desired. And you, mayhap, to have been something likewise in the love-days. Yet I pled and reasoned with her to be a wise maid; but, indeed, she only to make a gleeful mock of all that I did say.

Now I went forward again, for I was not harmed by the stone, only that I did be shaked, as you shall think. And the Maid to go offward from me, and to sing, and did oft dance naughtily as she went. But truly, I did be silent with her, for I was but human, and did lack that she come to mine arms, and love me, because that I had pluckt her safe from that place. And, indeed, this to be but a natural desiring; and you to have understanding with me, and to know that you also to have this lack and need, if that you to have done aught for love of your maid, and she to deny you a word of loving tenderness.

Now, when the sixth hour did be come, we made a halt and eat and drank, and afterward went onward again, and so came presently clear of the two monstrous fire-hills, and their great noise to be presently to our rear, and likewise that quiet country that did be round their feet, and did seem so utter husht and strange and doubly so, because of the upward noise of the mountains, and because of the slow and subtle earth-shaking that did be so constant, and because of all those things that I have told.

Now, when we had made halt, the Maid had done her hair very uncomely upon her head, and had lookt slyly to see whether I did note; but truly, I took no heed; so that in the end she had it again in a pretty fashion, and did sing naughtily and with an heart of mischief, as she did shape it loose and wondrous nice about her head.

And I still to have no word for her; neither to show that I did watch her with love and somewise a quaint pleasure of her perverseness, even whilst that I did strive by silence and an aloofness that I bring her to my side, as she did be in the first days; for truly I did ache that she be near unto me, and to cease from her waywardness that did put a distance of spirit between us, as you to perceive.

And when that the twelfth hour did be come, we made halt again and eat and drank; and the Maid to serve me very intent, and hand me the water, the while that she went down upon her knee, as a slave; but when I would have laughed gently at her mockings, and taken her into mine arms, she went from me very sudden and cold, and was afterward silent and did sit apart from me.

Now I also did be silent, and in the first because that I was a little pained, and also because that I did be new touched with the love-foolishness that did trouble Mine Own.

But afterward, I ceased from these feelings, and did be intent to another matter; for it did seem to my spirit that there was some danger anigh to us; and I had a thought of the Humpt Men, and lookt well about, and did beckon the Maid to come nigh, because that the trees did be plentiful thereabout, to hide any creature.

And when that I had the gear upon me, and the Maid her bundle, we went forward again; and I to be very wary, and bid the Maid keep close to my side; but indeed, she would not obey, and went offward among the trees, so that I was all an-haunted with dread for her, and ran and caught her, and talkt wisely with her; but indeed she did not hark to me; but did run off in the moment that I loost her.

And I caught her again, and I took one of the straps from around the Scrip and the Pouch, and set it about her pretty waist, and the end I held in my hand, and so had her to

obey me in this thing which did be needful to her safety.

And the Maid to go with me very husht for two great hours, and I alway to look well about. And in the end of that time, the Maid did begin to sing impudently, and I did ask her that she be a quiet maid, lest that she bring danger upon us ; but she to be the more impudent.

And lo ! as I did strive that I look all-ways, lest any harm did come upon us, and in the same moment to reason Mine Own from her pretty folly, she did grow very husht, so that I lookt round upon her in an instant. And truly, she had cut the strap with her belt-knife, and did run away very swift among the trees. And surely my heart did slow a little in my breast, because that there did seem something a-move in the dark of the shadows, where the trees did grow thick, and the Maid did run that way in her foolishness and waywardness.

And I ran hard after the Maid, and did call her, not overloud, lest I bring somewhat upon her ; but she to have no heed, and to run very light and swift, so that I caught her not for the half of a minute, as it might be ; for she was gone ahead, and I did be a little cumbered with mine armour.

And lo ! when I caught her, I shook her, and pointed inward among the trees, for it did seem even then to me that something moved there ; but she to struggle in my hand a moment, and afterward to be still, and to ask with an insolence and a defiance whether that I did mean to flog my chattel, the which she did call herself in her naughtiness.

And, in verity, ere I did know, she had twist from me, and did run with a true wickedness straight toward that place where somewhat had seemed to be a-move. And I ran then with all my strength, and with a fearful and an anxious heart. And because I put all my strength in the matter, I caught the Maid in a moment, ere she did be gone any way ; and she again to fight to be gone from me. But I took her into mine arms, very strong, and I ran outward from that place where the trees made a darkness.

And surely, when I was come again to where the trees did be more spare, I saw that I was come nigh to that river which I crost on the raft, as you shall mind ; and truly I did be glad, and to feel safe in a moment. Yet I was firm now to my purpose ; for I set the Maid to the earth upon her feet, and kept my hold very sure upon her ;

for I did mean that I whip her, before that her love-foolishness bring her needless unto death.

And I took the belt from her pretty waist, for it did be but a light strap, and I whipt her very sharp over her shoulders with the belt. And, truly, she did make to nestle unto me in a moment, as that other time when that I whipt her; but I stayed her from this, and I set the belt thrice more across her shoulders, very sharp, so that she to learn wisdom at once, and I to be free for ever of this need to pain her, which did hurt me very strange.

And the Maid to stand very quiet, now that I did keep her from coming unto me; and her head did be something bent, so that I knew not whether I did mayhap have flogged her over-hard; for I did be something lacking in knowledge whether that a maid be very easy hurt.

And I stooped and lookt into her face; and lo! she did be smiling naughtily, and kist me in a moment very saucy upon the mouth, ere I did be aware; and afterward, she laughed and made try to make a bitter mock upon me, and askt when that I should be pleased to cease from whipping my chattel; for that then she should run away immediately into the wood, and to trust the Humpt Men that they protect her from me.

And surely, I lookt at her very grave; for I perceived that she did not truly jest, but made to anger me, and did be half in a strange anger herself, and something adrift; for she had not been whipt enough, but only to stir her rebellion utterly. And I saw that if she be not set right then, ere she leave my hand, she to be like to have some new foolishness that should take her unto her death, even as she had come overnear already, as you to know. And this to be because that her nature did be stirred so that her natural wiseness was all over-set, and she to be that she do aught of unwisdom that should come to her, because of her pretty love-foolishness, which did now be made the more strong, by reason of the half-rising of her anger.

And this way, as I have known, I perceived that, for her dear sake, I should not let my lovingness weaken me in that moment. And, in verity, I shifted my hand and loosed the fastenings of her garment, so that her

pretty shoulders did be bared. And her face to change sudden, and she lookt up at me an instant, with a little gasp; so that I knew she did be all upbroken, as was mine intent; but she did not yet have learned deeply in her heart, all that I was minded that she to learn; for even in that moment, she made a sound that showed she did try to mock me; but truly, she did not know in that instant whether to mock or to weep; though she did try to suppose that she had yet an heart for mockery.

And I set the belt thrice across her pretty shoulders, where they did be bared; and surely the blows did be very stern and sharp. And lo! in one moment Mine Own broke into an utter weeping, so that I took her instant into mine arms, and did hold her strong and gentle against mine armour. And she to be as a child in mine arms, and did sob very strange and bitter, as that she did be all undone in the heart.

And presently she did be quiet in mine arms; though I to feel how she did yet tremble; and she did cling tight unto me, and her face to be against mine armour.

And afterward, when that she had ceased to tremble, I kist her, and surely her mouth did be very humble, and her lids to be downward, and she to be something pale. And she then to be awhile more in mine arms, very quiet; and so to come unto her dear self. And lo! presently, she to want to kiss me of her own accord; and she put up her lips, very sweet and as a loving maid, that I kiss her. And surely I kist her, with an humble and a masterful love; and a strange pain to be about my heart, as you shall suppose; but yet my heart and my reason both to approve mine action; and the Maid to be but the more mine own, and to have come again to her dear natural wisdom.

Now, in a while, the Maid did come to composedness, and to be very gentle and sweetly natural. And she made presently that she would have me to loose her; and afterward, she turned her back to me, even as a dear child, that I fasten her garment again upon the shoulders. And she did be both shy and glad, and humble, and in dainty pride of submission and utter Mine Own.

Now, when I had buckled the belt very nice again about Mine Own, we went backward a space, until that

we found the bundle, which she had dropt, when that she ran off from me. And I saw also the portion of the strap, which she cut ; and so all to be found.

And we went then at a good speed toward the river ; for I was still minded regarding the seeming of movement which there had been among the trees ; and very wishful that we have a raft made with haste, so that we might come to the little island, where I did sleep before, upon the outward way, as you shall remember. And I thought to have our slumber again in that place, and to make that day's journeying something short, because that the island was near, and a good and safe place for our sleeping.

And I told the Maid concerning the island ; and she to be in great delight and interest, because that it did be one of those halts of mine outward going, and did be all eager as a child, when that I said we should truly have need of a raft to come to the island.

And we came downward to the shore of the river, and, indeed, there did be those two same trees, that had been my raft, there upon the shore of that place. And I showed these to Mine Own, and truly she did nigh to weep upon them, because of her dear emotions and love, and did cut a small branch therefrom, with her belt-knife, and put the branch where she did put the piece of bark ; and this to be for a remembrance and an after-delight and pondering.

Now we lookt well in all parts, that we find some other small tree that should be fallen ; and the Maid did climb a rock that did be near, with a flat top, so that she might search out around.

And presently she cried out to me that there did be a tree to our purpose, and but an hundred paces away ; and she to go with me to show me, and to aid, if need be; but, indeed I carried the tree very easy, and had it with the others ; and afterward, we went about again for branches, and these I cut from live trees, using the Diskos with care and wiseness.

And with these branches to be for cross-pieces, and our belts and the straps for binders, I set the trees together into a raft, and made it pretty good for our need, and so that no monstrous thing in the river should have chance to snap upward between the trees at my dear One.

And when the raft was done, I gat it to the water, and the Maid did lend her strength; for the thing was heavy, as you shall think. And when this was done, I pushed a sharp branch downward into the shore, and I hookt a branch of the raft about this mooring, and so did be nigh ready for the voyage.

But first I did need a pole to push the raft, and did wonder now where the other did be gone, that I cut upon the outward way; for I had set the pole with the two trees, as I did mind, having some vague thought that mayhap I should live to come that way again.

And I had a little strange unease that the pole did be gone; but scarce to know that I did be troubled, yet to set me to a new haste. And I bid the Maid put the scrip and the pouch and her bundle secure upon the raft; and in that time I lookt well about for a sapling tree that should do my purpose. And I saw that there grew an odd one a little to the side of the flat-topt rock that the Maid had lookt from; and whilst that I cut it, the Maid did come to watch, and made pretty chatter in the time that I trimmed the branches away.

And lo! whilst that I did be part divided in mine attention between her dear talk and my work and an haste that did be born of that little unease that was come upon me, my spirit to seem to be aware that there came a danger anigh to us; and the Maid to have this same knowing; for she ceased her speech, and lookt at me with somewhat of trouble. And lo! in that moment, as I balanced the pole in my hands, there came the noise of a sudden bounding to our backward part, where the trees did grow something anigh.

And I turned, instant, and lookt; and behold! there did be upon us an Humpt Man, very lumpish and mighty; and he stretched out his hands, and ran at me. And I had no time to the Diskos, which did be upon the earth to my feet; and I smote the Humpt Man with the point of the pole that did be in my hands, and the point took him very strong and horrid in the breast, and entered in, so that the Humpt Man gave out a strange howling, that did be half seeming of an animal and half of an human. And he clutched at the pole that did so hurt him, and I stoopt very

swift for the Diskos, and had it in a moment. And the Humpt Man tore the pole out of his breast, and in the same instant I ript him from the head downward, so that he did be nigh in two halves; for I had no mercy in mine act, even though my heart did be something sorry.

Now, even as the man died, there did be a sound of running in the wood before me; and lo! I turned very speedy to the Maid, and she was there to my back, and had her belt-knife drawn in her hand; for she had it in her bosom, where she had put it when that I took her belt for the raft.

And I caught the Maid about the waist with my left arm, and was come with her to the top of the rock in two great boundings. And I set her there upon the rock, and turned again to the way I came, and swung the Diskos free; for indeed, I had seen that there did come a number of the Humpt Men among the trees.

And there came running from the wood, mayhaps a great score of the Humpt Men; so that it did seem to me that we did be going to die; for how should one stand against so many, and they so quick and strong, as you shall mind.

Yet, in verity, I had no despair; but did be mixt in the heart with a great fear for Mine Own, and a stranger and exulting gladness that I should do that day some deed for Mine Own Maid; and truly this to be the pomp of love and the heart-cry of the barbarian, as you shall say. And this maybe; but truly I did be proper human, and to make no excuse because that I was natural; neither have I hid anywheres aught that I did think and feel.

And surely, I must cease from my thinkings, and go forward with my telling; for the Hmpt Men did come forward at a wondrous quick run, and did swarm upward on to the rock, as that they did be panthers; and they made no outcry; but came silent to the killing; and I saw that they did be something smaller than he that I had but then slain. And, in verity, I did be all knit in that moment with speed and cleverness; for I split the heads of three, with but quick turns of my wrist, as I did wield the Diskos. And I

kicked the face of another, in the same time, with my metal boot, so that he died; for there did be all my strength and all my skill working then for our salvation.

Now all this to have been done in but a few beats of the heart, as I might say; and these men to have been in the front of the attacking. Yet there did be no space to have breath; for there leaped three more of the Men upon the rock; and one smote me with a great piece of rock that he carried, so that mine armour did seem as that it crackt, and I to be driven backward upon the Maid; yet had slain one of the Humpt Men, even in that moment.

And surely, my dear One caught me in her arms, behind, and steadied me, so that I fell not; and I slew the Humpt Man with the rock, even in that moment whilst Mine Own held me, as he came again to strike me. And I then to be firm again upon my feet, and did spring at the third of the Humpt Men; and surely there was no room that he should be able to avoid me, even did that be his intent; and he came at me with a great leap. And I stood strong, looking clearly to my work; and I swung the Diskos with both my hands, and the blow took the Humpt Man in the middle part, and split him, whilst that he did be yet leaping. And in that instant there reached over the edge of the rock, two of the Humpt Men, and gat me by the feet; so that I was pulled sudden to my back very hard and bitter; and this to be done, even whilst that the body of the Humpt Man did be yet in the air. And the body came forward over me, and did be utter dead already, and fell down upon the rock beyond me, and rolled horridly and went over the edge of the rock.

And I did be all shaken and something bemused by the hardness of my fall; and the hands of the two Humpt Men pluckt me sharp to the edge of the rock, the while that I did strike vaguely to wound them; but did only chip the rock, and fortunate that I harmed not the weapon.

And lo! in the moment that they had been like to have me downward to the earth into their midst, I to

make a good stroke, for I cut the shoulder of one very dreadful, so that he loosed me; and immediately, I kicked very fierce with my freed foot, and surely I nigh crushed the hand of that other with my metal boot; and he likewise to cease from dragging upon me.

And immediately, I knew that Mine Own did be helping me that I get instant to my feet again; for I was yet something dazed.

And there came then a rush of the Humpt Men up the rock; and truly it did be a glad thing for our lives that they might come up only upon but one side; for the other sides did be utter steep and smooth worn; and this to have been unto our saving, as you shall think.

And I stood up to the rush of the Humpt Men, and did smite hard at them, with a quick circling of the Diskos, so that the great weapon did glow and roar. And they gave back from the blaze and the sound of the Diskos; and surely then I ran in upon them, whilst that they did be something bewildered; and I gat the foremost man full upon the head, so that he did be dead before he did know what thing happened. Yet, in verity, this did be a dread moment to me; for the Humpt Men leaped in at me upon every side in an instant of time; and I did be struck upon my head-piece and upon my back and breast with the stones that certain of them did carry, so that I rockt as I stood, and did near to swoon, and mine armour to be all dint and bent upon me, and I truly to seem that I had come to the time of my dying.

And lo! in that moment of time, there did come to my dazed sense a low and bitter cry of anguish from the Maid; and this to set all my life aglow in me. And, in verity, there went a strange greyness of fury before mine eyes, and I then to fight as I did never fight before; and I did smite as it did seem forever. And the greyness did ease from mine eyes, and the Maid did have her arms about me as I stood, and the dead Men to lie heapt upon the rock, and Mine Own to steady me, for I did be near slain and the blood did go from me, and mine armour was all broke upon me by the smitings of the sharp stones.

And I lookt something slowly upon Mine Own; and she to know that I would ask whether that she did be harmed anywise; and she to be very brave with me, and to tell me that she did be well; and she to be all slain in the heart, because that I did be so hurt; but truly I had fought a good fight, and did lack only to know that she come to no harm.

Now my wits did come back into me very soon; but I did be utter weak, and scarce to stand; so that I did mind only that I get Mine Own safe unto the raft, and to put off then from the shore.

And I walkt slow to the edge of the rock, and lookt well about, that I learn whether the Humpt Men did be all gone away; and the Maid did steady me.

And lo! there came up in that instant the last of the Humpt Men, and they were five and did creep very stealthy, that they have me in surprise. And I loost from the Maid, for I saw that I must come upon them whilst that I had any strength left in my body; and they now to leap upward unto me, so that I gat the first upon the head, and he to go backward dead; but truly I did be more weak than I knew; for I swayed upon the edge of the rock, and sudden I went downward to the earth; and did be there upon my knees, and my back to the rock.

And, in verity, the Humpt Men did come in upon me very swift; yet did they give back from the Diskos, which I swung to and fro, so speedy as I might, for my weakness, which did be so utter that I could nowise come to my feet to stand.

And Mine Own came down swiftly from the rock, and ran past the Humpt Men, and I to make that I shout to her to go to the raft; but truly I had no voice in my body, and did be dumb and weak, and did know that I should be gone forever from Mine Own in a little moment, and she to have none to protect her, neither to know the way of our journey, save by reason.

And behold! Mine Own did shout to the Humpt Men, and I perceived that she made to draw them after her; for she ran to and fore and did shout continually. But, indeed, the Humpt Men had no heed of her; but did make alway to come at me; and surely,

in that moment, one of the Humpt Men reached me, and smote me so shrewd that sure he nigh crackt his monstrous hand upon mine armour, and did drive me backward upon the rock, and to make me bleed afresh, so that I was all in a daze and near swooned away. And the Humpt Man caught at the Diskos; yet, in verity, he loost it on the instant, for it did burn and shake him very sore; and immediately, he smote me again, and so made to end me.

And lo! in that moment, the Maid ran right in among the Humpt Men, and she struck the man that strove with me, and drove her belt-knife once and again through his arm, very savage and determined. And surely, the man turned upon her, and he caught her by her garments, and he ript her two garments utter from her, so that they came away and she did be free. And behold, mine utter despair for her did give me a new strength, so that I shouted to her that she run instant to the raft; and I cut the Humpt Man in twain, and did fall back then into a part swoon against the rock. And lo! the Maid ran out from the Humpt Men; but they neither to know whether that they follow her or that they come in upon me; and as they did pause, she to call to them, and to try that she tempt them from me toward the wood; for she had no thought of her life, but only that she free me and save me; and I too weak even to have power to command her to the raft; and she, truly, to have no heed to such command, even did I thus to call again. And there I did be, half-gone out from this life, and lookt at her with eyes that did scarce wot, save as in a dream.

And lo! the Humpt Men ceased sudden that they heed her; and the three that did be left came very sly unto me, and with slowness and cunning; for they wotted not whether I did be dead, or but a-wait for them. And the Maid perceived that they came not after her; and she let out a great cry that did be distant-seeming in my dulled ears, and came back, naked, and running very swift. And she ran by me as death should run, white and silent and her face set unto despair, and her eyes utter intent. And she struck her belt-knife into the shoulder of the near Humpt Man; and the Man

howled and turned, and she did leap to the side, and the Humpt Man ran at her. But lo! she leaped again this way and that, and utter silent, and so quick as a light doth seem to dance all ways in a moment. And the two other Men did join with the first, that they catch her; and behold! she went about, and did run right away among the trees, and the three Men did come after her, running very lumbersome, yet with a great speed.

And the Maid had the knife in her hand, and I know that she did mean to slay herself presently, when that she could run no more; and in that moment it seemed that my heart burst; for that I should never more see Mine Own Maid forever. And there came some power of movement into me, and I came forward from the rock and fell over upon my face. And I gat again to my knees, and began that I creep after the Maid, and I did shout in whispers, for my voice had no more power to call. And the Maid went from my sight among the trees, as a far white figure, that did run very swift, and was presently lost utter to my sight; and the Humpt Men did go after; yet even in my weakness, I perceived that two did go something clumsy, as that they had been hurt in the fight; and they to be the rearward of the chasing; but he that the Maid did cut with the knife was to the fore, and did run very strong; and surely they were all gone inward of the trees with a dreadful speed, and were lost from me. And the world did become sudden and Emptyness and a great Horror, and there was no sound in all the Earth, as it did seem. And I knew that I was come to my feet, and did run toward the trees, and the Diskos did trail from mine arm by the hold-buckle; and the ground did be as that it moved and shifted under me, and I not to feel where I trod, but did only peer desperate and lost among the trees; and, as I to know now, I heard my voice calling strangely; and afterward there was a thundering in mine ears, and I came downward upon my face.

And I did know presently that I was alive, and there to be some dreadful terror at my heart; and surely I did remember and sickened and gat my head from the

ground. And I lookt among the trees; but there did be nothing, and everywhere there did be a strange silence and a dimness of unreal seemings. And I knew that Mine Own was gone from me, and had surely died. And the earth did be all stained about me with my blood, and I did be utter glad; for I to need death.

And I swooned again and was lost to my pain; but did live presently to know.

And there was a little strength come into me, and I gat my head up somewhat from the ground, and did peer among the trees; and my head did be too heavy, and my face came against the earth once more. And because that I could not hold up my head, I rolled my head a little, until that my cheek did be to the ground, and I to look thiswise, so well as I might; but there did be nothing; and afterward, I rolled my head again to the other cheek, and so to stare very weak and desperate, and not abled to look proper to my front. And lo! there went something among the trees, and did show white in the gloom of the wood; and did come through the trees. And I not to believe in the first that I did truly see aught; and sudden I to know that I saw somewhat. And behold! my heart did bound in me, so that all my body did waken; for I knew that Mine Own Maid did run slow and staggering toward me through the wood. And I did be now upon my knees and upon my hands, and did begin again to creep and to bleed; and did make little callings to Mine Own, that had no sounding.

And Mine Own drew nigh, and did rock and stagger, and did strike anon against the trunks of the trees, as that she did be gone near blind with her running. And in a moment she saw me, and that I did yet live and did come unto her; and she made a strange and loving crying unto me, with a great gladness and with an utter weakness.

And she came running, and was lost with faintness, and did sway this way and that, stumbling; and she went sudden to the earth, and did be still.

And I crept onward so speedy as I might, and the earth to seem alway as that it moved from my hands, and to slide; and this-seeming to be of my weakness;

for my hands and my knees went everyway, and my head to be that it kept nodding forward very stupid to the earth.

And lo! as I came anigh unto the Maid, where she did lie so quiet, I saw that something moved in the wood, and was running. And truly it did be an Humpt Man, and came forward very silent and with a quick slyness, as that he did track the Maid secretly; for he lookt alway to the earth. And I perceived that he was that one of the Humpt Men which the Maid had cut with the knife; for the blood did show upon the shoulder and the breast; and this bleeding mayhap to have slowed the Man; so that Mine Own did be like to have supposed she had come utter free; yet he to have found her, by tracking, as I perceived.

And I strave to my feet, that I should come to the Maid, before the Humpt Man; and surely I gat upright, and went with a strange running, and did roll, and lo! I fell immediate, ere I was come to her. And the Humpt Man to run also; and surely it did be a dreadful race; for I went creeping and did be weak and as that I was of lead. And the Humpt Man came very swift and brutish; and I came the first to Mine Own Maid. And I rose up at the Humpt Man, upon my knees, and I swung the Diskos, and the great weapon did roar in my hands, as that it did know and did live. And the Humpt Man ran in upon me; but I smote him truly with the Diskos, and he ran past me, all blundering, and fell and died upon his face, a little way off.

And lo! my wounds had brake out into a great bleeding, and my head did roll upon my shoulders. And I lookt down dull, yet with an utter great love upon Mine Own; and there did be no proper wound upon her; but yet she was all bruised and knockt and marked with the trees, and where she did fall in her running. And she did be there, very still and dear, and I to have brake my heart with love for her, but that I did be so dulled, as I have told.

And I fought that I should be strong a little while more against my weakness; and I strove that I set mine ear gently upon her breast, that I should listen for her heart. But my head did go downward some-

thing clumsy and heavy upon her; and I then to harken, and surely she did live and her heart did beat; though, in verity, mine ears did have at first a thundering; but afterward a quietness in them, that made the sounding of her pulsing to seem an utter long way off; and very faint it did be. And surely, in that moment even as I harked, I was gone over into a deadness, and had no more knowing; neither to have even a knowledge that I did be slipt from my senses. And, behold, the Maid did lie swooning; and I to be there in my broken armour, and my head upon the breast of Mine Own, and likewise to know naught; and about us the quietness of that Country, and the far noise of the great Fire-Hills that did sound through Eternity.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE ISLAND

Now I came unto my senses, and did bein pain and a great forgetfulness and bewilderment. And I strove that I rise ; but did be held by a strange force, that did be surely my weakness, as I to know afterward.

And I was upon my back ; and a little sound did be near me, as that something did pant. And I turned my head, very slow, because that I did so lack of strength. And lo ! I saw that the Maid did be anigh to me, and did be yet naked ; and did pant, and pusht hard and desperate with a great pole, which did be surely that one which I had cut when that the Humpt Men came upon us. And therewith I remembered all, and perceived that I did be upon the raft, and the Maid to push the raft along with the pole.

And, at that, I made a little sound with my mouth ; but the Maid not to hear me ; for she did look backward, as I should think to the shore ; and her face did be very set and anxious ; and there to be a far noise of howling, that I knew to be the voices of the Humpt Men ; and so to perceive that the Maid had come unto her senses, and had gat me somewise to the raft, whilst that I did yet be swooned. And thus to save me ere the Humpt Men had come. But, in verity, how she did this thing, I never to learn ; neither she to know, but only that her love did give her a great and desperate strength that she save me, that did be her man.

And afterward, Mine Own Maid did tell me how that she had come into her senses, and did be there upon the earth, and somewhat did be upon her breast; and she saw that it was my head which did be heavy upon her, and I to be surely gone out from this life; for I was so still.

And she came from under me, and did ease me out upon the earth, and her heart nigh brake, because that I was so be-bled, and my blood to have stained all that did be near. But when she had gat me restful, she saw that I did surely live; and a great hope to spring in her heart. And oft, as she had eased me, she had lookt about, and there did be naught to the sight, save the body of the Humpt Man anigh, and the others dead about and upon the flat-topped rock, as you to mind.

And she ran then very speedy to the raft, and brought water from the river in my headpiece, and she dasht the water upon me; but I to have no power to come unto my senses. And lo! in that moment, she to know by some subtle telling of the spirit, that there came some danger anigh; and she then to make that she save me, or that we die both of us together. And she strave with me, and did carry and draw me that weariful way unto the raft. And she gat me on to the raft; and she ran then for the pole that did be beside the rock; and whilst that she took the pole, she perceived her torn garments, that did be yet in the hands of the Humpt Man, even as she had slipt them to escape him. And she caught the garments very hasty from the hand of the Man, and ran then to the raft; and she pusht the raft out from the shore, and leaped aboard; and behold! as she made to use the pole, there came a sound out of the wood. And there ran from the wood the two Humpt Men that did yet live; and they to have tract her, after that she did run from them; and they ran downward to the shore, very silent and intent upon her; but she to work with an utter despair, and to have the raft a good way out, ere they did be come. And surely, they either to have no power of swimming, or to know that there did be a Dread in the water; for they made not to come after; but did stand and stare very stupid, and afterward did howl; and this howling

I did hear when that I was come unto myself upon the raft, as you do know. And by this telling, you to be so wise as I; for more I know not, save odd things that I did learn afterward, that did but set my love more holy unto Mine Own Maid; and these to have been but small matters of love-thoughts that we did have together; and scarce clear unto my remembering.

And lo! even as I harked unto the howling of the Humpt Men, the sound did grow more faint and far off; for the Maid worked very desperate with the pole. And I did feel that I would help her; but yet was so a-lack; and surely, even as I did mean to rise, I was gone again utter from my senses; and that dear naked One did pilot me safe and loving unto the safe harbouring of the little island, that you do mind; and had no thought unto herself; but only that she save me. And I to be there, scarce offward from my death, and to have no knowing of aught, and no more power to help or to be a shield unto Mine Own; but did be only an helpless man, that had surely died, save for the care of My Beloved.

Yet did I fight a good fight, and have alway a great joy in the remembering.

Now, I mind nothing very clear after this for a great time; but only of pain and weariness, and of half wakings and times when I did know naught, and others when that I did be awake, yet did have no realness, either in myself or in any land or place; and all to come back strange and vague; yet with a constant knowing that there went Love about me, and a great and gentle watchfulness; so that I was eased when that the black mists of my weakness did uprise about me to swamp me; and I was made to know hope, when that unknown despairs did live stealthy within me.

And lo! there came a time when I waked, and did be freed of uncertain burdenings and peculiar woes and that still haze through which great achings did come constant upon me. And surely, I was laid very nice upon somewhat that did be soft, and there went a sweet quietness about me, and an healthful drowse did grow in my bones.

And slowly I perceived that the Maid did kneel beside me, and did look upon me with so great a love and

gladness that it did be as that I drank in health and a drowsy joy and peace. And surely, she stoopt and kist me with an utter gentle love, upon my mouth, and her tears to go sweet upon my face; and truly I kist her again, with an utter content.

And I lookt at the Maid, and knew that she did be drest again, and did be in the garments that I did give to her, as you to mind; which did be that one, and the inner, that the Humpt Man tore from her, and which she had slipt, that she escape from the Man.

And afterward, I found that she had made a very cunning mend of the garments, whilst that she did sit so utter long beside me to tend me; for she had gotten threads from her torn garments, and had made needles from thorns that did grow on the little bushes of the island; and the thorns did brake oft, and she then to have another; and so to persist an hundred times. And this way she did be drest very nice and dainty.

And Mine Own Maid perceived how that I lookt with interest at her, and did mind, very natural, how that I last to have seen her; and she then to blush gently; and did kiss me, that she have her pretty face something from mine eyes. And truly, I to wish the more that I be strong, that I kneel in a glad reverence unto her; for this way did be my love, and ever so; and you likewise, that have truly loved.

Now I did begin that I grew very steady unto my strength, again, and Mine Own Maid did tend me alway, and she gave me a broth of tablets and the water at set times, by the telling of my timepiece. And oft she washt me and did change the bandages, and did wash and dry the bandages, that she use them over again; for we did be so lacking for such matters, as you to know.

And on the fifth day, I was come utter to ease; and did be wondrous happy, and Mine Own to make pretty talk unto me; but had me to be alway quiet, because that I did be yet so weak.

And on the sixth day, I to be let answer Mine Own, and to say how great I did love her, the which mine eyes had said alway, while that I did lie in silence. And I to be assured by the Maid that she did be in health, and recovered; but indeed, I saw that she was gone very

thin, and that her eyes did be weary, even while that they had so great a love and a gladness to me.

And I made Mine Own to bring her tablets by me, as she did alway, and when that I had kist them, and she to have eat and drunk, I bade her to make me the broth ready; and when she had made the broth, I askt that the Diskos be set anigh me. And afterward, I bid her to my side, and had her to lie by me; and I took her pretty head upon mine arm, and told her that she to lie thus and to sleep, and to have no fear that she weary me; for that I to be but the more rested to have her so, beside me.

And she in the first to trouble that she be too heavy for mine arm; but truly, I showed that my strength was something come back to me; for I prest her gentle unto me, and she then to nestle content, and to be gone into an utter sleep, and to have been in a sore need of the same.

Now, the seventh day, as it might be called, was a wondrous happy time; and when I waked, the Maid did be sleeping as a child to my side, and her face nestled against me. And she to waken in a moment; for thus she drowsed and watched through all the hours whilst that I had slept.

And we then to eat and drink together, after that Mine Own had made me easy with a gentle washing and care. And I now to be allowed that I have my tablets whole, and the water afterward, as when that I did be well; and this to please me, as you shall think; for I did ache that I be strong very speedy, that I have power to guard Mine Own again, and to go forward with our journeying, that I have the Maid unto the safeness of the Mighty Pyramid; and surely, now that I had my tablets whole, I to feel that I did grow near unto fitness again; and moreover, they did satisfy my hunger the better than the broth.

And afterward, she went off from me a little, to her toilet; but I to ask that she be so swift as might be, and she to promise very merry; and she came back in a little while, and her hair to be in a lovely cloud about her shoulders, and her pretty feet yet to be bared from her bath, which she had in a pool beyond some bushes;

and she to say that I did be so impatient a man, that she to be forced that she do the half of her dressing with me; but truly, she came thiswise only because she to know how I did delight in her thus, and to watch the way that she set up her abundance of hair; and she to be hungry also that she be with me, and to love me that I watch her, even while that there did be oft a little and quaint stirring of shyness in her dear heart.

And she then to do her hair upon her head, very lovely; and afterward, I put up my hands, and took it down again; and she then to kiss me and to ask how that she should ever have it proper upon her head, if that I did alway so tease her.

And she then to take her hair, and did set the abundance of it upon both sides of my face, and then to kiss me, as I did look up at her, from out of so much beauty.

And afterward she cut a lock of my hair, and a lock from her own dear head; and she did plait the two locks together, so that our hair did blend and be together; and afterward she hid it in her bosom. But I did be then out of content, and would have done likewise, only that it did so weary me to uphold my hands; and she to cut a second lock from my head and a second tress of her own most lovely hair; and she made me to kiss the hair that did be from her, and she then to kiss the hair that did be from me; and afterward, she did plait them together, and gave them to me. And I set the hair, for that time, under the great bandage that went over my heart; and truly, she did be then the one that lackt content; for she to say that the second plaiting did be kist, and the first to lack; but I to refuse to exchange; so that we made up a quarrelling, and did presently have to be kist, unto forgiveness. And, truly, have you not likewise known such glad foolishness, when that you were in the love-days.

And I then to make her to sit by me, and I did tell her a tale how that a young man did once live in the olden days, and did meet with the One Maid Upon All The Earth. And how that they loved and did be married, and she to die, and of the utter and desperate madness of grief that nigh destroyed the man; and how that he sudden to wake into the future of the world, in

a New Time, and did come to learn that His Own did also to live in that time. And he then to make that he find her; and did truly come unto her. And how she did be different in her beauty; but yet to be utter lovely. And the man did hold an utter reverence to the Maid, that had been his wife in the olden dream-days, so that his reverence of love did live in him like a constant pain and anguish of sweetness and trouble, and of holy thoughts that did be bred of her lovely companionship, and of his memories. . . . . .

But, in truth, I gat no further in the tale than this; for Mine Own did have come sudden into weeping, and had gotten to her knees, and did hold my hand against her breast, and did put her hand gentle upon my lips. And, in a moment, she to whisper somewhat through her tears; and there to be dear Motherhood within her face; and a sudden shining of Memory in her eyes, that had been near dreadful, only that it did seem to be to her as that she were part dreaming. And the strange and solemn pain did come also unto me through the part-open gateways of my Memory. And I to remember very clear and with an anguish in that moment. And I told Mine Own how that the babe had gone onward, after that the Beloved had died. And there did be then an utter quiet upon us.

And lo! sudden the Maid did bend unto me, and I to take her into mine arms, out of the vague dreamings of her Memory-dreams. But, ere she did be come outward entire from the haze of the Past, she to try to set somewhat into words concerning this memory-vision of the babe; but someways to be strangely dumb. And I did be silent likewise, because of all those things that did be between us forever and forever.

And presently, she kist me, and was herself again; and she went from me to attend unto our food.

Now, that did be truly a lovely day; for I to have gat sufficient of strength that I did be able to have interest, and talk with Mine Own Maid; and she now to be well rest, and to have ease in her dear heart concerning me.

And presently, I to tell the Maid an hundred thousand things concerning the Mighty Pyramid, of which I had so oft said somewhat; but never to have gat so great a

chance as this unto a plenty of time and so nice an oneness in the way that our minds did go.

And of all things that did most have a happiness unto the Maid, I to perceive that the great Life and Humanness of the Millions to dwell within her imaginings as a cloud of warmth and quiet joy; for I did show this thing to her, so well as I was able; and, in truth, you shall tell me in honesty whether that I have made the same likewise clear-seen unto you?

And she, as you shall mind, did be a maid that had grown all her life in a Refuge that did be shaken with hauntings, because that it lackt the power of the Earth-Current to protect; and with a People that did be weak-conceived through great thousands of years; and where love did bloom something faded, even in youth; and youth to have lack of life-blood of an utter joy, such as did be ours and likewise to many that did be of the Mighty Pyramid.

Though, truly, there did go millions then, as now, that did never to know love; though the name did be in their mouths, and they to have belief that the sweet kernel did be in their hearts; but, in verity, THIS to be love, that your life shall bound in you with abundance, and joy dwell round you, and your spirit to live in a natural holiness with the Beloved, and your bodies to be a sweet and natural delight that shall never be lost of a lovely mystery that doth hold a perfect peace each unto the need of the other; and all to be that there go round about you a wonder and a splendour all the days and the nights that you shall be—the Man with the Woman, the Woman with the Man. And Shame to be unborn, and all things to go natural and wholesome, out of an utter greatness of understanding; and the Man to be an Hero and a Child before the Woman; and the Woman to be an Holy Light of the Spirit and an utter Companion and in the same time a glad Possession unto the Man. And lo! if one to die, then the soul of the other shall fail; and that one never to have full life again, in that bitter parting. And this doth be the true Human Love; and all else that be not like to this with the Man and with the Woman, doth be but a borrowing of the name of Love for that quiet desir-

ing, which is but an Endurance beside Love, which doth be between they that be not mated both in their souls and in their bodies. And this telling to take no heed to those base joinings that be made for purposes of wealth or Desire or other piteous ends; for, in verity, these to have no more dealings with the thing that I do tell upon, than hath the merchanting of goods, or the need of a glutton. But the thing that I do have upon my heart doth be that dear and uplifting Power of Love, which I to set forth in this mine own story; for, in truth, I to have known love, and to need death when that I be parted from Mine Own.

And I then to say on, and did tell upon the Might and Wonder and great Olden Delight of the Underground Fields, that were below the Great Redoubt, as you do know. And I told how that they went downward an hundred strange miles, that did be dug of the labour of Millions and of the years of Eternity.

And I set out unto Mine Own concerning that there did be wondrous villages spread through that great and hidden Country that did be in the underground; and how that great millions of the Peoples did live there, and made a constant labour in those deep Lands and Countries, that did be truly so monstrous in all as an huge Continent.

And I showed Mine Own how that there did be wondrous processes that did be learned in the Ages; and how that water did be made in chemistry; and truly she to nod to this, because that she did mind upon the powder that we did use; but truly the powder to have to be made in the first, as you shall think; and we but to advantage ourselves of that which did result, and I to speak to her of the making of the powder, rather than of the way that it afterward to make chemistry with the air unto water.

And I told the Maid how that there did be mighty underground pipes that went across the Night Land, and did be, mayhap, oft so much as twenty great miles deep in the world, and did come upward into the seas of the Land; and all to have been made secret and hid from the monsters of the Land, as I to know from much readings of the Histories.

And I then to tell Mine Own Maid concerning the Lowest Field, which did be the Country of Silence, and was the Place of Memory unto all the great Millions, where did linger and bide the ghosts of an hundred billion griefs and the drifted thoughts of sorrowful hearts; and there to live a great hallowedness and a mystery of silence and an holiness and a Greatness, as that it did be the Expressing of all that doth be Noble and Everlasting that ever did come out of the heart of Man and all the lost Dead of Eternity; so that the spirit of a man did seem to go on great wings, unto lovely and splendid resolvings, if that he but to walk lonely awhile in that Country, but surely did be never lonesome unto the spirit.

And lo! the Maid did be all husht, as I did speak, and did look downward unto me with her eyes very bright, and lovely with the thinkings and tears that did stir within her.

And sudden she to ask whether that I did make my resolve to my journey, whilst that I walkt in that place; and she to look very intent and beautiful upon me, as she did question. And, indeed, I saw that she to mean a lovely praise unto me, as you to perceive; and truly, I did feel a little strange, as that I did be both glad and shy in the same moment. And she then to ease me of any answer; for she gat upward upon her knees, and she put her two hands to the sides of my face, and bid me to look into her eyes and to know that she loved me with her soul and with all that did make her to be.

And afterward, she kist me very gentle upon the forehead, and did be then husht awhile, as that she to be in thought; yet oft she did look downward at me, and did have a beauty of love and honour within her eyes, so that they always to shine, as she did look at me.

And so, presently, did end that lovely day of quiet speech and togetherness; and the Maid did prepare me for my slumber, and she then to lie anigh to me, and her head to rest gentle beside me, so that her pretty face did be near unto my breast upon the right side; and she to give me at the first a loving and sober kiss that did be somewise to set a guard upon her tenderness, and afterward did sleep content and gentle, as

that she did be in the same moment a child and a woman.

And I also to come unto slumbering; yet did know vaguely how that Mine Own did rise a little upon her elbow, this time and that, and look very loving into my face, that she have assurance of my comfort and well-being; and once I did waken, proper, and lookt at her, and she then to kiss me gentle upon mine eyelids, and bid me to sleep; and so did come herself unto her sweet slumber.

Now when that I did come to my proper wakening, I did hear the fizzing of the water, and to know that the Maid did be risen a good while, and had made her toilets, as I perceived in a moment, when that she came unto me; for her hair did be in a lovely cloud upon her shoulders, all combed and made ready against my waking; and she to have bathed, as I supposed, in some warm pool that did be among the bushes upon the island; and she now to slip her foot-gear, that her feet be bare unto me, as I did love, and to stand a moment, and her eyes to twinkle gently. And I lookt at her with love and honour in mine eyes, as you shall know, and she to have dancing of sweet pleasure in her heart, that I so to look upon her with holiness and with natural love, and surely the last doth be unnatural if that it do lack the first; but my love did burn upward out of my being, so that the flame of my spirit did light the fires of my heart, and my Reason to add coals unto that fire that hath lived for ever, and doth be as that it shall be never quenched.

And Mine Own in a moment did kneel beside me, and, truly, someways in her deep intenseness unto me; for our love did make all the world holy, and she to be both uplifted and as that she must give all the humbleness of her heart unto the greatness of my love; and this she to feel, and her deep and utter love, to make it as that she did be all a passion of humbleness unto me, so that in her soul I did rise in that moment upon the wings of my love, and to seem that I did be all the world and all time and all place and all that ever she did need unto her.

And she put out her arms to me, and her eyes did shine with those tears that do never be shed; and lo!

in a moment, she did be upon my heart, and we two to be husht together in content; for our need did be in the other. And truly, where there do be two together with love, there doth be neither lack nor need; but eternal fulfilment.

And in verity this to be my Hope for that which doth come Afterward—— that all doth be leading unto so glad a joy as this, and that all pain and grief and all that doth make the shaping of Life, doth be but a process by which we be eternally perfected from living unto living, unto each Fulfilment that doth be but the doorway unto great Fulfilment in the Beloved.

And, presently, Mine Own Maid did loose herself gentle from me, and washt me and tended me; and very husht and tender, and something down-lidded of her dear and lovely eyes.

And we then to eat and to drink together, and joy so great and quiet did be upon us, that it did be as that we had gone into an eternity of peace and an utter content. And surely, as the thought did stir in me, it did be of beauty that we did be both of us true unto the other, in that life, and I never to have kist a maid, until that I kist Mine Own, and she to have been likewise, and to have fended all men from her, because that they did be Strangers unto her inwardness, and so we two to be so utter together, both in that our spirits did be knit, being each the complement of the other, and because that we had no secret pains of remembered things, to set any apartness between our hearts.

And in verity, I to think back then upon my jealousies, that I have told, and to know that Mine Own did never to have given herself lightly to any, neither to have taken lightly; and her spirit to have been alway mine through all the Everlasting; and mayhap this to be how all Peoples shall come to be in the length of time, only that to us had come the great wonder that we did early meet; though this also to bring that utter pain, which doth seem to slay, when that once you have known the Beloved, and to be parted.

And so I to think, and did presently ponder with a great and strange pity upon they that did not yet have met the Beloved, and they mayhap not to have kept all

for the Beloved ; but to have been light with that which doth be the Treasure, because that Love had not come to show them that they did unknowingly squander the strange and holy glory which doth be the possession of they that shall come to the Beloved and say, All that is thine have I kept for thee. And the Beloved to know and to have peace in the remembering. But what doth be the peculiar sorrow of they that have gone overlightly, when that they shall meet the Beloved ; for then shall there be a constant and inward regret, as a thorn in the heart, that they not to have observed alway that holy care of all which doth pertain unto love ; and they nigh to moan in the spirit, *if they had but known, if they had but known.* Yet, in the end, of their pain, shall they grow unto all loveliness, if that now they have truly come upon love, and to Live with Love ; for this to be the especial glory of Love, that it doth make unto all Sweetness and Greatness, and doth be a fire burning all Littleness, so that did all in this world to have met The Beloved, then did Wantonness be dead, and there to grow Gladness and Charity, dancing in the years.

And there to be yet one thing upon which, mayhap, I not to have thought sufficient ; for it doth be this, that they who did err, as I have shown, shall be the greater for their *Pain ;* and let this be to cheer you, if that you have done foolishly, and thought not upon that day when the Beloved shall come ; for Pain is but the voice of Development or Destruction ; and truly you to suffer the first, if that Love doth work in you ; but truly, the more that you have lacked, the greater shall be your pain ; for the more change there doth need be in you.

And so would I have you now to think, and to know that the Beloved shall come, and so shall you live in glad care of all your being, that you be able to come unto the Beloved in that day, and to say with beauty and human joy in your heart, even as I have said ; and thus shall you miss that bitter pain. But yet, truly, you to be like to heed not this, until that Love doth come upon you ; and I therefore to cease from this vain setting of mine inward reasonings.

But truly, when that day be come, as I have told, you to know how that there went alway with me in this

mine own story which I tell, the simplicity of Truth; and how that I did be minded only that you to know, and thereby that you have gentle wisdom that you lay not up pain for that day. Yet, if you do lack to go with me, you to need that developing which shall then come upon you.

And all that day we did be wondrous happy, save once when we saw that there were Humpt Men upon the shore, about the Flat-Topt rock where did be the fight; but what they did there, we not to be able to see, only that presently they went away; and indeed seemed to have no thought unto us, neither any knowledge; and so did be gone again into the forests; and we saw no more of them, after that time. And afterward we to be lost utter in happiness.

Now, upon the tenth day, I did be so come into health that I to walk a little way to and fore upon the island; and Mine Own did go with me, and so I to pace a good while, and afterward to rest again.

And Mine Own then to bring mine armour to me, which she had scoured very nice; but truly, the armour did be sore broke and bent, and did be jagged inward this place and that, with the monstrous strength of the Humpt Men, when that they did strike me with the great sharp stones.

And, in verity, how I should ever come again to wear this protection, I to be in doubt. Yet, truly it had been a wondrous suit of strength that had kept my life within me when that I had been so dreadly beset; and I to know that it to be yet like to save both our lives, if that we could someway straighten it, and ease the broken jags from wounding me afresh.

And I thought a time, and the Maid with me; and afterward we gat that stump upon which I had leant, and had this to be for an anvil; and we found then smooth stones of different sizes, and these to be for hammers; and we wrought all that day, with restings, upon the armour; and surely, we beat it into a very good shape, from the inward, and the broken parts we beat smooth, so that they should not wound, and in the end to have mine armour fit to go upon me.

And I, by now, as you shall think, to be drest part

in my garments ; but not all ; for there did be yet some of the bandages upon my body, so that for the main I did wear the cloak, that the bandages be easily come at. And all that day did be utter happy, whilst that we workt ; for we to be together.

And on the morrow, as we do say, which was the eleventh wakening upon the island, the Maid and I to talk long and oft, whilst that we yet worked upon the armour ; and we to ponder the best way that we continue to our journeying ; for, indeed, I was not come to my strength ; yet was I very earnest that we go forward early ; but in the same time, I did fear, lest that we meet with aught of Danger, and I to be a-lack, because that I was yet weak.

And presently, the Maid and I both to think upon the same thing ; for she to cry out concerning the raft, and I to have the same word in my mouth. And, in verity, this to be a great thought ; for then should we be able alway to be free of the Humpt Men, and to have frequent rest when that we be weary, and to sleep with an ease in the mind ; and, indeed, I to hope that the labour of oars should be something less than to go upon the feet.

And surely, we talkt upon this a good while, and afterward we left the armour, and went over to the raft, and so to learn whether we should have power to make it something more stable, and that we have some way that we should put a solid matter between our bodies and any monster that should chance to swim under us.

And we went then together over all the little island ; for I did search for some bush that should have a long tendril in plenty, and supple, and so to suit for binding. But, truly, there did be no such bush in all the island ; and this to put me in trouble, as you shall suppose ; yet was there a sufficient plenty of small and upright trees, that did seem very good for any purpose of structure.

And when we had gone all about the island, and found naught that should bind, the Maid to say with a pretty jesting that we should cut her hair, and plait it to be for cords. And, surely, even as the words did come from her, they to set me upon the thing that should supply our need ; for I stoopt sudden to the grass that did grow oft and plenty in this place and that, and was so tall as

my thigh, and to my head in the middle of the clumpings where it did sprout. And lo! it was wondrous tough.

And the Maid to have likewise perceived the thought, almost in that moment; but I to have been the first this time, and so to tease her; for truly, we had grown that we did nigh alway to discover all things in the same instant, as you mayhap to have seen. But I did surely be first this time, and must kiss her, as we do kiss little ones, that they be eased in their dismays and disappointments; and she to see how I did mock her, and she to pretend to weep; and surely how could she even to pretend, when that she did not be able to keep her pretty mouth from searching with laughter unto mine; but must be kissed full and plenty in our constant joyfulness.

And we cut then a good arm-load of the grasses, using the knife, and had these to our camp; for we did be homely now unto that place, as you shall think. And the Maid then to show me plaiting, and how that we could work in the grass piece by piece, so that we should plait unto any length that we to need.

And all that day we workt, and did be very happy together; but when that we came to the time of our slumber, the Maid had done twice and thrice so much as I; and surely she came over to me, and kist me very grave, that I should be not to fret, even as I did kiss her with gentle mocking concerning the thought about the grass; and so did she make level with me, by this impudence and quaint sweetness.

And on the next day, which did be the twelfth, I took the Diskos, and on that day I cut down six of the trees; and alway the Maid did bring her plaiting, that she be near me; and when I had cut the six trees, she had me to cease, lest that I risk to open any wound. And truly they to have healed very wonderful.

And afterward, we to plait all that day, and did also finish the armour; and did be content and utter happy.

And on the thirteenth day, I counted the tablets, and found that we yet to have sufficient, if that we came unto the Mighty Pyramid within any reasonable time. But I insist that I should eat no more now than did be my usual way; and though Mine Own did beg and to coax me, and even to try whether that a naughty and

loving anger should do aught to shift me, I not to alter from my deciding, which was based upon my reason and upon my intention that Mine Own should never to go in hunger-danger, whilst that there did be life in my body. And when that the Maid did show this dear and pretty anger, I to take her into mine arms, and to tell her how I did reverence and love her, and that she did be all beauty unto me, and I but to love her the more, because that I did know the reason for her dear shaping of anger unto me.

And she then to kiss me, and yet to beg again that she have her way in this thing; but presently I did show her that my reasoning was sound in this matter; though I said not that my strongest thought did be unto her own needs. And she to have to agree with me in her brain, even whilst that her heart did ache to feed me. And truly, I to love her but the more, as you shall think.

And this way shall you ever to manage a dear and sensible woman that doth both love you and hath reason in her; for the wise man and he that hath an heart unto bigness, doth be never hasty to command. But, indeed, I speak not now of the way that you shall go with a woman that hath the love-foolishness upon her; for this to be a different matter, as you do know; and a woman then to require a double wit and tenderness in the governing; but also to need to be commanded, mayhap with sternness; yet with the more love.

Now, when that we wakened on our fourteenth day upon the island, we gat to work, so soon as we had washt and eat and drunk, and Mine Own to see how my scars did go.

And I cut seven more trees that day, which made thirteen in all; and afterward I trimmed the trees very nice. And when this was done, I cut twelve good sapling-trees, and two more very thin, that I did mean to be for paddling the raft upon the water. And Mine Own Maid did sit near me alway, and never to be ceased from her plaiting.

And whilst that the Maid did plait, and make gentle and happy talk with me, I presently to sit beside her, and had her belt-knife to my need; and therewith, when I had cut bark from a tree, I made a foot-long cross-

piece of wood which I did fasten with pegs and some lashing unto the end of one of the paddle-shafts.

And I took then a piece of the bark, so big, mayhap, as would cover my thigh, and shaped broad one end and thence to a point; and when I had made holes in the piece of bark, I lasht the broad end to the cross-piece, and the end that did be narrowed, I lasht secure to the shaft, and likewise made holes down the length of the bark, and lasht it also thereby to the shaft, and thiswise I had a pretty good paddle, that did be about ten feet long in the clear shaft, and the head to be somewise two feet more, mayhap.

And when this was done, I shaped the handle so small as might come into the grasp of the Maid, and did jest her very loving and gentle that she give me so great a work, because that she have her hands so little. And truly, she presently to stop me of my mocking; for she put her pretty hands upon my mouth, and I then to have to mumble and to laugh, and so she to go forward again with the plaiting.

And when I had made the one paddle, I made also the other; but something more rough and heavy, and suited unto my strength; and so did be very well pleased; for they did be made more of my Reason than of memory; yet had I used somewhat of the kind upon the quiet lakes which did be in the Country of Silence.

And we then to join in the plaiting, and thus with happy talk and our times of eating, until that we did be come again to our slumber.

And on the fifteenth day, when that we had gotten up and washt and eat and drank, the Maid did look unto my bandages; and did consider that I be healed very good, if but that I not to overstrain my body. And we then to dance, half in play and half in victory, but gentle; and afterward she to come with me that she give me aid that we get the trees unto the water.

And in six hours, we rolled the trees down to the shore, and did begin then that I lash the saplings across the trees, and thiswise to hold them secure into a raft. And the midmost tree I put something more forward than the next; and so, until that which did be the front was shaped somewise like to the bow of a ship. And the saplings

to hold the trees thiswise, when that I had set the lashings about every sapling and every tree, where the saplings did go across.

And all that day I worked pretty constant and steady until that Mine Own had me to cease awhile, lest that I bend overmuch, and so to put strain upon my scars. And I to be reasonable; but yet to go forward again with the work; only that I did rest now, this time and that; and so did all to prosper.

And on the morrow, which did be the sixteenth day upon the island, I made an end of lashing the saplings across the raft; and I set up also, two rests for the paddles, so that we might row as we stood upon the raft; and afterward, being ready, we gat together our gear, and set all upon the raft.

And I put the pole that the Maid had used, also upon the raft, and loosed the straps from that first raft, and had the straps for our requirement, as heretofore. And mine armour we made safe on the raft; but the Diskos I had to my hip, as ever; and so did we be ready to leave that little island of refuge, where we had been so near to sorrow, but yet had come utterly upon joy.

And surely, Mine Own did take me by the arm, and she to stand a little, and to look with me unto that bed of soft herbage where she had laid me, when that I did be so nigh unto death; and she then to kiss me very sweet and loving and gentle, and all a-tremble with the tears and love that did stir in her; and I to set mine arms about her in love; and so we to turn and to put off then in the Raft.

CHAPTER XII

PAST THE HOUSE OF SILENCE

Now it was in the tenth hour of that day, that we put off in the raft; and surely we found the paddles to go very easy and with somewhat of balance in the rests which I had set up, as you do mind; and the raft to go forward with not overmuch of labour; so that we stood, the Maid to the fore paddle and I did be to the hinder one, and we pusht very steady upon the paddles, and had the raft presently to a speed something less than we should walk over the rough way of the Land.

And about the twelfth hour we stopt and eat and drunk, and went on again with our easy labouring; and truly, when that we gat set to the movement, we scarce to wot that we did aught more than rock something fore and back upon our feet; and so the hours to pass, and we to have a constant gentle speech one with the other, and the Maid oft to look back unto me with love, and to set her lips that she tempt me; but yet to shake her head most dear, when that I would leave my paddle, that I go forward unto her.

And when that the eighteenth hour of that day was come, we to draw inward our paddles, and the Maid set the cloak very nice to be our bed, and afterwards we

eat and drank, and so presently to our slumber, and did have sleep, very sound and happy, all in a moment, as it to seem.

And eight good hours after, we did waken both of us, together; and lo! we scarce to mind where we did be for a little moment; but afterward to know and to perceive that we did be safe and naught to have come unto us in our sleep. And surely we laught each in the face of the other; for we did be so joyous to be wakened each unto the knowledge of the other. And after that we had kist, we washt somewhat in the water of the sea, and so to our food. And when we had eat and drunk, we made again to the paddling; and went forward thus along the coast very peaceful and content all that day.

Now, in all, that voyaging did take four good days of four-and-twenty hours each, for we made no great haste or labour, but went easy, that I have time to gather my strength. And naught to happen in all that time save that once we did see a great beast to come upward lumbersome out of the sea on to the shore, and there did eat and browse upon the herbage in that part; or so it did seem to us; though, truly, we did be over far off to have surety.

And so, when that we did be four good days upon the water, as I have told, we to come to the land, upon a flat place of the shore, where the Country did slope upward unto the mouth of the First Gorge, of which you do mind. And this to be in the tenth hour of that day; and we likewse to have begun that voyage in the tenth hour, as you do remember; and surely it to have been a sweet and peaceful water-journey; and I to have been happy, if that all that did be yet before us, to hold so much of pleasantness and safe goings.

And surely, the Maid and I did presently strand the raft, so well as we might, and did then to wonder whether any should evermore to behold it through all Eternity. And we lookt a little, each at the other; and the Maid then to cut free a small piece of the wood of the raft, to be for an after remembrance.

And so we to have our gear upon the shore; and the

Maid then to give me aid that I get once more into mine armour; and so I presently to have the Scrip and the Pouch again to my back, and the Diskos in my hand, and all in readiness, and the Maid with her bundle (that was now grown small), and her belt about her body, that she have her knife unto her hand.

And there to be some miles unto our right, that grim and utter huge Mountain, whereon afar upward in the monstrousness of the night did be perched those four fire-hills of which I have told. And below them, there to go upward the great hills of ash, that had been cast down throughout Eternity. And this thing had the Maid lookt upon for a great time, and did be never done of her wonder; neither I, nor any human that ever should have sight of so great a wonder.

And so we too have come presently upward into the high mouth of the Gorge, and did go onward then into the gloom, a little space, until that we were come to the place where the Gorge did bend sharp unto the left, into darkness.

And lo! we made pause here, and turned again unto the Country of Seas, that we have a last outward look over all that Deep and living Land, that did be hid so far downward in the everlasting night of the world.

And, in verity, it did be a solemn thing to know that we, mayhap, to be the last of the olden Humans that should ever to look upon that country; and I to wonder, in that moment, whether that the Humpt Men should ever to develop, in some far eternity, unto the full sweetness of the spirit of Humanity which I did think to be inward of them. And this to be both an odd and a natural thought to have then, as I do see. But at that time, I only to think it, and not to wot or to trouble whether that it did be odd or otherwise. And I to think that Country did be somewise as the Olden Time renewed; but truly we to look upon early things with new eyes.

And presently, I turned, and the Maid slipt her hand into mine, and the tears did go silent down her face, because of all that did be prest upon her heart; but yet not to be all of sorrow, for there to be both sorrow

and happiness, and also there did be somewhat of vague emotion that she never more to look upon that dear island where she had nurst her man again unto life and well-being; and she to be in mind of all those places where she to know that in after-life her memory to wander; and she to have oft-told tales, mayhap, unto her children, of that Country that they never to see; but only to be for a wonder to them for ever.

And we past then round the Mighty Corner-place of the Gorge, and went forward, somewhat stumbling, into the gloom.

And my strength did grow constant, as we journeyed; yet would the Maid never suffer that I carry her; but went always very light and clever, and was grown, in truth, set unto this constant wander.

And at this place and that, I to make pause that I show Mine Own those places where I did slumber, and she alway to need that she come unto the very part, and that she stand for a little moment where I did lie so lonesome, as I went outward unto that despairful searching. And alway she then to be utter tender with me, and to be something lacking of speech, because of the calling of her heart.

And surely, Mine Own did be alway now to ask me when that we should be come unto the Night Land; and to require how far it should be, and to be taken with a growing of excitement, very dear and natural; and, in verity, I to be almost so much so as she; and to wonder what she to think of the Mighty Redoubt, and of all that strange and monstrous Land. And, above all these, I to be shaken unto my very heart, that I have the Maid speedy unto safety; lest, after all, even though we to have come so far, there somewhat to happen of woe. And all this did make it a hard thing that we not to begin to race, and to exceed the hours that we did set; but truly we had wisdom in this matter, and slumbered alway after the sixteenth hour.

And we never to see aught of life in all that great and desolate Gorge; for there did be only the gas-burnings, and the boulders and the stark rocks, and oft the rank smellings of the gases. And alway an utter and everlast-

ing quiet; save when some lonesome gas-fire did oddly to moan or to whistle, and the whistling to sound very dree across the great waste of the Gorge, and likewise the moaning to be but a thing to make the loneliness to be felt in the heart; and the Maid to feel thus with me.

Now it was upon the fifth day, in about the seventh hour, that I heard oddwhiles a sound in this place and that of the Gorge, as that the rocks made husht and strange sounds at us. And I to have the Maid instant very nigh to me, and the Diskos to my hand, and we then to go onward with a great caution.

And thrice we did pass places where gas-fires did burn and dance, and made oft a low moaning, and somewhiles a little whistling; and the other sounds yet to come oddly from the rocks, in this place and that, very strange and unthought of, yet to be something familiar.

And presently, when that we were gone onward something more, we to see that there went a lightening and a darkening afar along the Gorge, so that the background of the night was made to lose somewhat of the intensity of its darkness, as with constant shudders of light; and this to be surely the far away dance of the flame of the Great Gas Fountain. And we then to watch alway as we journeyed, and to see how that the vague shudderings of light did grow in the distance of the night, and did merge and become known presently in a strange uplifting and falling of a far away blue flame.

And the sound now to come more steady, and to grow in a long while into a monstrous piping, very great and wonderful, and having a constant change in the note.

And we to come past the last of the lesser fires, and to be in that part of the Gorge which did be fireless, save for the great upward dance of the Gas Fountain, which did now to be grown huge and plain-seen, and did make a quaking light over all the Gorge.

And we then to go onward for about a good mile, that we be not so deafened by the noise of the Gas Fountain; and it did be now beyond the seventeenth hour

so that we eat and drunk, and made our rest in a secure place among the great boulders.

And lo ! when that we waked, we eat and drunk again, and did be something silent, as we to gaze at the Flame dancing monstrous, and lonesome and all set about with the stark and mighty Rocks, which did be like unto giants of silence that did watch forever.

And presently, we had our gear upon us, and we went forward toward the utter dark of the Mighty Slope ; and we began that huge climb, that should last through days in an eternity of night.

And oft in the first hours did we turn about from our blind stumblings, and gaze downward out of the long height, unto the loom of the Flame, that did shudder far below in the night, and made a quaking light in that far darkness. And so did we leave it to dance forever through Eternity in that deep and lost place of the world ; and we bent all our will and our strength unto the climb.

And this way went we stumbling for sixteen great hours ; and by that time had come to a pace proper for that task, and to be something numbed, and seeming grown unreal, because of the affecting of the Darkness.

And lo ! for eight days then did we go upward forever through that most dreadful night. And after the first day, we crept alway upon our hands and our knees, and I to go in the front, and had the Diskos ready upon my hip. And I took two of the straps from the pouch and the scrip, and so had a certain length ; and I set them from the waist-belt of the Maid unto mine own belt, and so did know ever that she came close after me.

And we made journeys sixteen hours long, and did eat and drink at the sixth and the twelfth hours, and likewise we eat and drank ere we slept, and again upon our wakings ; and our slumber-time to go alway somewheres about eight good hours ; for thus did I be heedful that we have all our strength for that dreadness of the journey, which did be yet before us, across the fear and horrid terror of the Night Land.

And oft, at this time and that, I was utter sickened and a-wearied of reaching forward and upward forever, and making blind fumblings that I find a way about great boulders and the rocks and holes that did be in our path in the dark; for it to seem that we went lost from all life and knowing, in a blackness that should be never slackened from about us.

And I, these times, to make a pause, and to call softly unto Mine Own that she creep up nigh unto me; and I then to take her into mine arms, out of the utter blackness of that night. And so to give and to have comfort.

And surely, Mine Own did whisper once unto me, that she did be stunned with love and wonder in the heart; for she to never cease to know that I did adventure through this great night, that I find her. And this thing did make me very warm in my heart, as you shall think; and yet I to stop her speech with a gentle kiss; and she then to know that she be dumb concerning her thought in this matter; yet she never to cease from remembering it, and did be the more stirred with the trouble of her lovely secret worship; for, in verity, she to have me to be for her hero; and this to make me in the same moment both something shamed and greatly proud.

And so we to be together, and after such pause, to go forward again, with a new courage.

And so did we go onward through those eight days.

And it soon to be grown cold, so that we both to need the cloak over us in our slumbers; but in the journey-hours to need naught; for the upward-going did surely heat us very well.

And there also to be come presently a change and a seeming of thinness into the air; and the Maid to remark upon this, and likewise that the water-powder now to be that it not to fizz so plentiful.

And we went upward, as it did seem for ever, and journeyed very husht and steadfast; and likewise did halt at set times, that we eat and drink; and did alway sit then very close and quiet and in love. And so alway to go never beyond sixteen hours' journey each day,

and very weariful even so much ; for it to be a sore and constant labour of climbing.

And you to know that on the eighth day upon the Slope, about the end of the ninth hour, there to be an upward seeming of light, afar before us in the Darkness, and did show as a dull and vague sheen above us in the night. And truly I to know that we did be come at last a-near unto the Night Land.

And we went upward then very eager through the dark ; and the dim shine did grow, ever ; so that we soon to see it very plain, as a looming of light afar upward. And we ever to climb and to go onward. And lo ! in the fourteenth hour of that day, we came up slowly out of the Night upon the Slope, and stood at the ending of that strange road Where The Silent Ones Walk.

And surely it did be as that I was come home, and to have set my feet again upon familiar Lands ; and this to bring to you how far off I did seem to have gone ; and now to be come again to a Known Place.

And we went upward upon the Road, until that we did truly have topt the Slope, and at last to look out over all the wonder and mystery of that Land. And I never to be rid of the utter gladness of knowing that I was come there again, after so strange a journey, and that Mine Own had I brought with me, out of all the unknown world. Yet, truly, I also never to have forgetting that this familiar land of Strangeness did be the last test and the greatest dreadfulness of our journey ; and anxiousness did hang upon me ; for I now to have to take the preciousness of Mine Own among and beyond all that Danger of Horrid Forces and of Monstrous Things and Beast Men, and the like.

And truly, I did be like to trouble.

And, in verity, I did stare with a fierce eagerness unto the far-off place in the middle part of the Night Land, where did be the Mighty Pyramid ; and surely it there to shine in the midst of the land, and did be mine Home, where never had I dared hope I should return. And I set mine arm very swift and eager about the Maid, and pointed, so that she see quickly the wonder and safe Mightiness of that which did be our Refuge for all our

life to come, if but that we to win unto it. And the Maid to look with a great and earnest soberness and a lovely gladness and utter soul and heart interest, unto that Place that bare me, and where I to have come from, and now to take her.

And long and long she lookt; and sudden came round unto me, and set her arms quick about my neck, and burst unto a strange and happy weeping. And I to hold her gentle to me, and let her cry very natural, until that she was something unpent.

And lo! when that she was eased, she to stand close beside me, and to look again unto the Mighty Pyramid; and afterward, as she to steady, she to ask an hundred questions, so utter eager and so to thrill with joy and excitement, as that she did be a glad child. And an hundred questions I answered, and showed her new things and Wonders uncounted.

And of all strangeness that she then to see, there did none so to shake her in the spirit with terror as did that Dreadful and Horrid House, which did be the House of Silence. And it was as that her very being did know and be repulsed of some Horror that did concern and be in that House; so that she to want to hide in the bushes that did be anigh to the Road; and truly, I to think this wise, and to remember and to be ware suddenly that we did be indeed come now into the Power of Monstrosity which did be utter and forever abroad in that Land.

And surely, we went then in among the bushes that did grow clumpt upon the side of the Road, as you to remember; and afterward, I calmed this new fear that had come so quick upon Mine Own; and she then to peer forth with me from the bushes, and to have renewed sight over the Land.

Now, as you have knowledge, the House of Silence stood upon a low hill, and the Road did bend about the bottom of the hill; and this way did I come, when that I was on mine outward way.

And surely, as now I lookt, it did seem that we should try a short passage, and thereby be come free out of all danger in but a space of four or five days, if only we to

succeed. And I stood a good while very husht and anxious, and did consider this new way, and did presently point it out to the Maid, how that we saw the Mighty Redoubt straight to the back of the low hill where stood the House of Silence, and mayhap we might chance to find a safe going that way, and that I did ponder thatwise. For, indeed, as you do know, we must go *nigh* past the House, even did we return by the long journeying, and this to be because that the bushes did make a cover only near to the Road, and all to be a country of bare rock beyond the bushes on that side of the Road, which did be to the North and West.

And so went we forward, with a new caution.

And we came out from among the bushes upon the North-West of the Road, and crost unto the Eastward side; and here the bushes to grow very plentiful, so that I led on with a cheerfulness of hope within my heart. And alway I went so far to the South-East as the bushes would give us their cover, and this way I made that we should scarce to pass within a great mile of the dread and horrid House; though, in verity, this to be most dreadful close.

And we walked then for six hours, and went sometimes creeping, and oft stoopt, and ever with a great caution.

And when the twelfth hour did be nigh, we to begin to draw clear of the House; and surely there to come somewhat of ease into my brain and heart; for it did be as that we should come clear of all harm.

And I turned to the Maid, that I whisper gentle and loving encouragement unto her. And lo! in that moment, Mine Own gave out a sudden low sobbing, and was gone still upon the earth. And, truly, my heart did seem to die in me; for I knew that there did be directed a Force out of the House of Silence, which did be aimed unto the Spirit of Mine Own Maid. And I caught the Maid instant into mine arms, and I set my body between her body and the dreadness of the House; and surely, my spirit to perceive that there beat out at her a dreadful Force, which did have in it an utter Silence and a bleakness of Desolation. And lo! I saw in a moment that the Force

had no power to slay me; but did surely make to slay the Maid. And I set my Spirit and my Will about her, for a shield, if this might be, and I had her to mine arms as that she did be mine own babe.

And I stood upright, for there did be no more use to hide; and I knew that I must walk forever until that I have Mine Own to the Shelter of the Mighty Refuge, or to walk until I die; for only with speed might I save her from the dread and horrid Malice of that Force.

And I set free the Diskos from my hip, and had it in mine arms beside the Maid, and I strode forward out of the bushes, and put forth my strength that I journey with an utter speed. And ever my Spirit did know of that monstrous Force which did be direct upon us, to the Destruction of Mine Own Maid.

And odd whiles, as I walkt, I called Mine Own by her olden love name, and by the new name of Naani; but never did she move or seem even that she lived; and surely my heart sickened within me with a mighty despair, so that a constant madness did begin to thrill in me and to make me something monstrous in strength, with my fierce agony and intentness to save. And one hope only had I, that I bring her yet living into the Shelter of the Mighty Refuge; and so, swift, to the care of the Doctors.

And lo! I did strive to be wise in my despair; for I made a quick halting soon, and I warmed a broth of the tablets and water upon a hot rock, and strove that I set some of the broth between the closed lips of Mine Own Maid; yet did it be useless, as I to have known before in my heart. And alway I kept my body and my Will and my Spirit and my Love between the Maid and the dreadfulness of the House. And I made some of the water, and dasht it upon the face of Mine Own, and I chafed her hands; but truly it to have no use; neither did I truly to think it should be like to.

And I wiped her face then, and harked to her dear heart; and surely it did beat, very slow and husht. And afterward, I wrapt her in the cloak.

And I forced myself then that I eat some of the tablets, and I drank a great lot of the water, for a fever did seem

to burn in me, and moreover I to mean that I lack not for strength to my task.

And I set my gear upon me very speedy, and I lifted Mine Own Beloved, that did be now so husht, that once had been so merry and dearly naughty. And surely, I nigh choked as the thought uprase in me; but I set it back, and did but go the more furious. And surely no man did ever go so fast and constant upon his feet through an eternity; for I was come again to my strength, and there did be a madness of intention and despair upon me; and I went on forever.

And at each sixth hour when I stopt very brief to eat and to drink, I made to bring Mine Own to her senses; yet she never to come, and alway her heart to grow the more feeble; so that in the end I did utter fear to hark; and did but set food and drink into me, and onward again with an utter fierceness.

And why there came not any Sweet Power of Goodness to help me in my strait, I never to know; but did call desperate upon all Good things to aid me, as I went, to save Mine Own. But there naught to come; so that I had grown into cursings, but that I did not to lose my wisdom to any useless foolishness. And alway, as I went, I to see the Land blindly, and oft vague and grey as that I did look at naught real, and again with strange flashings of light, and the glare of fires; and anon to see the Land as it did be, and all odd whiles to have now to me the feel of a dread and monstrous dreaming.

And surely I sped for ever through the dreadful hours, and went neither to the right nor to the left, neither did I strive to hide in the bushes nor to evade aught, for I knew that the Maid died slowly in mine arms, and there to be no more gain in life, save by speed, that I have her swift to the Mighty Pyramid to the care of the Doctors. And a great and despairing madness grew ever within me.

And thrice I to have a vague memory that there came creatures at me, from the dark of the Land; but surely I slew them with the Diskos, and have no remembering thereof, only that mine anger did boil in me, and I to know once that the Diskos did run blood in my hand.

And lo ! there to come sudden unto my spirit the knowledge that the æther of the world did be stirred. And, indeed, I did be surely sighted by the great Millions of the Mighty Pyramid. And they to have seen me come forward into the sight of the spy-glasses, and that I did bring a maid in mine arms out of all the night of the world.

And truly, as I did after learn, the dear Master Monstruwacan had discovered me great hours before ; for there had been a steadfast watch kept in the Tower of Observation for my returning, if that ever I should return ; and the might of the Great Spy-Glass had shown me plain a good while gone, and that I did carry somewhat, that was surely the maid that I did go to find. Yet had the Master given an order that no word be set abroad to the Peoples, of this discovering, lest that the emotions of the Millions to tell overmuch unto the Evil Powers of the Land. But now had the Millions also come unto knowledge; for many had ceased not to watch through their spy-glasses, and the news to travel very speedy through the cities ; and surely now there did be a constant spiritual noise in the night, to be heard only of the Spirit, yet to suffice to wake and to warn all that Land.

And truly, as I after to learn, the Master Monstruwacan did know by the instruments that there came a Force out of the House of silence, and this to trouble him greatly ; so that he set the word through the Pyramid, by the Hour-Slips, that all the Peoples strive to contain their emotion, lest they bring an Harm and a Destruction upon me, by warning the Land with the greatness of their feelings.

Yet, in verity, this did be useless ; for the Peoples did be very human, and could nowise check their gladness and great wonder and excitement ; for it was to them so great a wonder almost as we should suffer if that a man in this Age should go beyond Death in search of his Beloved ; and afterward to come backward unto the Living ; and, surely, in such case, how mighty should be our amazement ; and this to be somewise how they did be ; yet with it also a sweet and natural gladness

and strong welcoming, which doth be the true beat of the Human Heart unto the Wanderer.

And presently, and through all the time that I came forward across the Land, there did be mayhaps an hundred million that did never cease to watch me from the embrasures from the View-Tables, and from all vantages. Yet, for a long while, only they which possessed strong spying-glasses did be abled to see me truly; for I was a great way off.

And millions did but stare vainly unto that part where I was said to be; and the Hour-Slips to come out four times in the hour, and to tell aught that did be known. And so shall you perceive that Humanity did but have grown the more Human.

And, in verity, I went forward with all my strength, and did drive heedless through the miles and the night, and scarce conscious of aught, because of the aching madness of despair that did grow ever within me; for I knew that Mine Own Maid died alway in mine arms, as I did carry her.

And later, a monstrous space of hours it to seem, I knew that I was come to that part of the Road, where it did bend somewhat unto the Vale Of Red Fire; and this did be something anigh to that wilderness where the Youths did fight with the giant-men.

And I came over the Road, and urged my body utter furious across the Land. And, surely, in that moment when I crost the road, great numbers of the Millions did see me, that had not seen before. And there went a shaking in the æther of the World, because of the sudden emotion of so mighty a Multitude; and lo! it did be as that in that moment the Land was at last waked; for there came from far away unto the Eastward, a faint and dreadful laughter, as that a monstrous Being laught unto Itself in some lost and dreadful country. And the Laughter passed over the Land, and did echo strangely, as it did seem, in this part and that part, and presently to go rolling round in the far and hid West Lands, and to be as that it wandered awhile amid the far mountains of the Outer Lands, and was presently lost from my hearing.

And my heart chilled a little maybe; but yet did I

not care over-much ; for I to lack all if that I lackt Death, if that I not to be given power to save Mine Own. Yet did I make a little pause, so that I got the knife from the belt of the Maid, and did also to bare the Capsule ; for if that there came a Destruction upon us, I to make instant sure that Mine Own Maid be safe unto death and I then to go quickly with the Capsule.

And afterward I again upon my way.

And ever upon each sixth hour I did stop that I eat and drink, and did onward again, even as a machine ; for I commanded myself to this duty of victual, that I lack not my strength unto the saving of the Maid. Yet, truly, I did seem to choke alway as I strove with the tablets.

And lo ! ever as I went forward did the Land awake ; and my spirit to know that Great Forces did be abroad restless. And the Monsters to begin wild roamings, because that they also to know of the Unrest that did be come into the Land. And there to go presently odd roarings across the Land, from night unto night. And I to go forward the more desperate, and to step neither to the right nor to the left ; but to make direct unto my Mighty Home.

And the Vale of Red Fire did be soon afar off unto my right, and the bulk of the Watcher of the North-East to be somewise unto my left, before me ; and the great back to be toward me. And truly, I lookt at the Brute-Force, and it did be as that I drew nigh unto a Mountain of Watchfulness ; and above it in the everlasting night did be the blue shining of the luminous ring, and the ring shed a light downward over the Monster-Force ; and the shoulders did be huge and humpt, even as two small hills, and it lookt forever from me through eternity unto the Pyramid. And this to be plain, though I did be a great way off from it.

And sudden, as I went, there came Somewhat out of a bush unto my left, and rose up at me, very long and tall ; and surely it did be some kind of a man, and came at me. And my fury and my despair came inward upon me in a moment, so that I troubled not to set down the Maid, but leaped at the thing, where it did be yet half hid in the dark. And lo ! it died in pieces, and the Diskos

did roar to content my heart an instant. And I then onward again the more savage, so that my heart did be a dreadful thing within me.

And lo! there stole presently from afar the deep and dreadful baying of the Hounds; so that I knew we did be surely dead, save that a miracle should happen. And I askt in my heart in a fierce and mad fashion why that they did not to rig one of the olden shooting weapons, that they shoot from the Pyramid, and so to give me some aid in mine extremity.

And behold, even as I did be so bitter, there went afar upward in the everlasting night, where did shine the Last Light, the sharp flashings of the Set Speech; and I did warm in my heart a little with hope; for the Master Monstruwacan did see that I was now all discovered, and there to be no more use for silence, and did speak straight and helpful unto me. And I made to read the Set Speech, but mine eyes had been mad and near blinded with lost hope. But in a moment I saw clear. And behold, the dear Master Monstruwacan bid me to keep good my courage, for that they did have made ready three of the olden weapons; and moreover, they to save me, even if that they have to turn loose the Earth-Current over the Land. And he commended me with Honour, and that I strive forward yet a little while; for that an Hundred Thousand Men did be prepared, and did even then go downward in their armour by the Lifts.

And surely, as you shall think, my heart eased a little in me, and there burned somewhat of a hope in my spirit that I yet to bring Mine Own unto the Doctors, ere it be too late.

And the baying of the Hounds did grow nearer in the night; and there to grow ever the roarings over the Land; and a sense of Evil and monstrousness to be abroad in all the night.

And lo! I to have come by this so that the Watcher of the North-East did be backward upon my left; and I lookt keen and fearful now at the Monster-Force and behold, the great bell-ear did quiver continually, so that I saw the Monster made somewhat known unto all the Land. And the Monster did look as ever, unto

the Pyramid ; and did be a great and silent Hill of Life that did lean toward the Pyramid ; and the light from the Ring came downward upon the monstrous hide, which did be set in vast folds and wrinkles upon it. And the Monster to know of me ; yet never to move, neither to show life, save that the ear did quiver so horridly.

And I knew that they made some great preparation in the Pyramid for our defence ; for all the night did begin now to shake and to quiver with the mighty beat of the Earth-Current.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE COUNTRY OF SILENCE

And lo! I did become something nigh unto the Mighty Pyramid; and my great Home went up vast into the everlasting night as a very Mountain of sweet Life and Safety; and had surely amazed me afresh with the utter Bigness of it, only that despair and weariness did have too grim an hold upon my heart for me to care of aught, save to have Mine Own Maid within the safe wonder of the huge Refuge. And it did be still afar off from me.

And I to go forward across the Land with a strong going; and lo! as I past a hollow place where did burn a fire-hole, there came something out of the hollow. And the thing gat upward from crawling, and did be a great and haired Man. And the Man lookt at me, and afterward came unto me, and did put his hands forward, very eager, as he came.

And I did see the hands plain in the light from the fire-hole, and the hands were monstrous, and did be armed brutish with horrid claws, so that the Man should have been able to rip aught, even as a wild beast.

And I put Mine Own very swift to the earth; and surely, I cared not for life or aught; for this thing did make to delay me, and I to be fierce with despair that aught should halt me. And lo! I leaped very furious and with cold

anger at the giant ; and I smote at the monstrous brute ; but he unto the side in an instant of time, and so escaped the blow. And he flung forth his monstrous arm out of the half-dark of a shadow that did be cast by the dance of the fire-hole, and caught my head-piece and pluckt it from me so strong and brutish that he cast me nigh a dozen feet on to my back. Yet I was not harmed in the life, but only sore shaked and bruised ; and I to be up in a moment, and came in upon the giant, and the Diskos did roar and blaze in my hands as I swung the weapon. And I gat the giant above the middle part, and the Diskos did glut itself, and went through the giant as that he did be naught, though so huge and monstrous and girt with strength. And he to have surely turned his shoulders as he died ; for the upper part of the giant-man went horrid to the earth, and the legs and the trunk stood plain in the night of the fire-hole, and the blood went upward as a fountain in the night.

And I made no pause, but leaped unto the Maid, and had her in a moment to mine arms, and onward again past that dead thing, that did only then to fall with an horrid sound. And surely the night did be full of an astonishment and upliftedness of the Millions, so that their spiritual cryings did go all about me, and did tell me that they had perceived this thing, and did cast their love and delight unto me, and a vast excitement to be upon them.

And lo ! I scarce to have gone a great mile more, but there came two vague things out of a dark place, where certain rocks did upstand ; and I smote them with the Diskos, and went onward ; but what they did be, I never to know.

And surely, after that, I did seem to go smiting forever ; for there to come, time and oft, strange things out from the bushes and the rocks, as that all the Land did be a-crawl with foul and monstrous life ; and I to go smiting, as in a dream, and to speed forward ever with a more fierce despair ; for surely the end of our lives did be come, and I not to be given power to save Mine Own Maid.

And all the Land did be full of grim and monstrous roarings, and odd-wise lower sounds, very deadly. And once I did hear the noise of giants running. And all the night to be Evil. And, in verity, how I did not be slain

by some dread Force, I not to know, unless that I did be burned free of all weakness that an Evil Power should have chance to harm me through ; for, indeed, I had been dealt a bitter training a monstrous time.

And lo ! there arose constant now the hoarse and dreadful baying of the Hounds, and made known that a mighty pack did be out. And they to seem to be no more, maybe, than a good mile unto the South-East ; and I to be all alone, save for the dying Maid that I held in my arms. And I lookt vainly and with despair for the Hundred Thousand that did be Prepared, and had come downward, as you do know, unto mine aid. But truly, there did be naught to see anywheres, save the strange lights and shadows of the Land ; and the movement of monstrous life in this place and that place. And the Hounds to come nearer with every moment of time ; so that indeed, I knew that death did be very nigh.

And I ceased not from my stride ; but went forward, and did begin to run ; for the Pyramid was not a huge way off in the night ; and the shine of the Circle about it, to be plain seen, save here and there, where it did be hid strangely. And I to have a despairing hope that I come yet with Mine Own into the safety of the Circle.

And the baying of the Hounds to come ever the more near ; and surely it did be a doubly hideous bitter thing that I lose My Dear One, so nigh unto Home ; and the great Mountain of my Home to go upward before me into the night, and to seem so near that surely I did be almost there ; but yet, mayhap, two great miles off, even then. And, behold, I called out in vain despair and to no end, why that none come to give me aid in this extremity ; for the hounds did bay now but the half of a great mile, upon my left, and did surely have scent of me, by the way of their dreadful baying.

And, truly, the Millions to have an anguish of sympathy for me ; for the spiritual noise of their emotion did be plain unto my spirit ; and they surely to have seen and to have interpreted the way that I did look about me and appear to call out in despair ; for there came all about me in a moment the companioning of a great and sweet spiritual force, which did be bred of their quick going with me in their understanding and love ; and they to have perceived how

that I did be unto the end of hope ; and the Hounds to be almost upon me.

And in this moment, there came afresh to my hearing the shaking beat of the Earth-Current ; so that I knew the Humans to take desperate means to save. And there came to my view a vast pack of the Hounds unto my left, and they came running at a great pace, and their heads did be low, and they to be so great as horses ; and seen plain and again in shadow, all in the same moment, as they did come.

And, in verity, I knew that we two to be dead indeed ere a minute be gone, if that the Humans not to haste. And I stood where I did be ; for there was no more use to run ; and I lookt from the Hounds unto the Mighty Pyramid, and again to the Hounds. And again I lookt with my hope gone, unto the Pyramid ; for the Hounds did be scarce two hundred fathoms off from me ; and there did be hundreds of the mighty beasts. And lo ! even as I lookt that last time unto the Pyramid, there brake out a monstrous bursting flame, that did rush downward from the Sealed lower part of the Mighty Pyramid. And the flame smote downward upon the Land where the Hounds did run, and all the Night to be lost from my sight in the brightness and strangeness of that mighty flame ; so that I saw no more the Pyramid, or aught ; but only the shining and dreadful glory of that flame. And the flame made a blast in the Night, and a hotness that did seem to wither me, even where I did be from it. And I perceived that the Humans had truly turned loose the Earth-Current upon the Hounds, that I be saved. And there went a constant great thundering over the Land, because that the Earth-Force did rend and split the air, and did tear up the earth. And the roaring of the Monsters did be husht and lost in that mighty sound ; and I to see no place where the Hounds did be ; but only flames and broken lands where the Earth-Force did strike ; and great rocks did be hurled all whithers, with a vast noise ; and truly it did be a mercy that I was not slain an hundred times, if this might be, by the fallings and burstings of great rocks and boulders.

And lo ! in a moment the Humans did cut off the Earth-Force, and had it again to their control. And there to

seem now a great silence upon the Land, and an utter dark; save that flames and noise came from that part where the Current did strike. And I very speedy to come free of the dazedness that had me, and made again to my running; for, in truth, it to seem now that I should yet be let to win unto safety with Mine Own.

And surely, I to be yet in expecting of the Hundred Thousand to come unto me; but they not to come. And all about me the Land to begin again to give out the noises of the Monsters; and to send forth new and peculiar noises, as that there did be more awaked in the Land than did be ever heard by me before. And presently, I saw that there went living things, creeping, between me and the light of the Circle. And I to know that I yet to have to fight bitter, if that I would bring the Maid safe. And I swung the Diskos free, and ran on.

And sudden my Spirit to know that I did be warned of some new peril; and I to look upward into the night, that the Master Monstruwacan should mayhap to tell me the danger, by the Set Speech. But, in truth, there came not the quick flashings of the Set Speech; but only an upward stillness, and a dimness of the lights of the Mighty Pyramid. And afterward, I to learn that the dear Master Monstruwacan made to warn me of danger; but that all the instruments of the Tower of Observation to fail to work, and likewise all the machinery of the Pyramid to cease, even unto the moving of the great lifts, and the moan of the Air Pumps; and all to have been this way for nigh a great hour, until that the Earth-Current did flow again more full. And surely, this doth show that Death did nigh to come unto all the Millions, because of the great trial that did be made to save us.

But, truly, my spirit did be warned by the trouble of the Millions, and because the Master Monstruwacan called vaguely with his brain-elements; so that I went ever more warily, and did look all ways. And lo! sudden I to stare above me into the night; and there to be a pale circle, very quiet and steadfast that did go alway over the twain of us. And I saw that this did be surely one of those sweet Powers of Holiness, that did stand between our souls and some dread Power that came anigh to work our Destruction. And I to have no over-fear; but did put my

trust in the Force of Holiness, and went forward, running warily.

And surely, I came mayhap so nigh as to within four hundred paces of the Circle; and I to think that I yet to win Mine Own safe and undelayed within the guarding of the Circle. And the light of the Circle did burn dim; so that I had sudden fear whether that it be any more use for a Guard, until that the Earth-Current to come more free. And all this as I ran, swift and wary and utter anxious.

And lo! in that moment in a dim place there rose up three beast-men from the earth, and came at me, growling. And the first did be so close that I had no room to the Diskos; but beat in the head of the man with the haft-part. And I leaped unto the side then, and swung the Diskos, and did be utter mad, yet chill, with fury; so that the Maid did be no more than a babe in the crook of mine arm. And I came in sudden to meet the two beast-men as they ran at me; and I cut quick and light with the great Weapon, and did have that anger upon me which doth make the heart a place of cold and deadly intent; so that I had a wondrous and brutal judgement to the slaying. And, truly, I slew them as that they had been no more than mice; and I had no harm, neither so much as a touch from them. And, behold! in that moment there came a great Shout of wonder and of welcome from within the Circle. And I lookt swiftly, and began again to run; for there did be men in grey armour all within the Circle; yet came they not to mine aid.

And lo! in a moment I knew why that the Hundred Thousand did have held off from me in mine extremity; for, behold! there did be monstrous Black Mounds all along without of the Circle, and did rock and sway with a force of strange life that did set an horror into my sou as I ran; for truly they did be the visible signs of monstrous Forces of Evil. And did any Human have ventured outward beyond the Circle, then had that man been Destroyed in the Spirit, and lost utterly; so that none had dared to come; neither had it been of use if any had made themselves to be a sacrifice to aid me; for, truly, they to have been of no use, when dead, as you shall say.

And there came a constant shouting from the Hundred Thousand to me, that I haste, and indeed to haste. And truly I did haste with all my strength. And I lookt unto the dear Circle of Holiness that did be above us twain ; and it to go steadfast over us ; so that I saw we to be surely saved.

And lo ! I to be no more than an hundred paces now from the glowing of the Circle. And behold ! even in that instant, there must come brutal things to destroy us ; for there came an herd of squat and brutish men all about me in a moment from the shadows, where they had been hid. And they caught at me, and caught at the Maid to tear her from mine arm. And truly, it did be as that they surely to have success ; for I could nowise in a moment free myself, and yet to guard the Maid and to use the Diskos. And lo ! I kickt with my metal boots, and gave from them and turned all ways in a moment, and wrenched free ; and I leaped back ; and the herd of horrid brutes after me.

And now I to have space for the Diskos, and a grimness in my heart ; and I came round very sudden, and ran in among the men, smiting. And I hit very swift both from the right and the left, and to and fro with a constant quick circling. And the Diskos did spin and roar, and made a strange light upon the faces of the men, and they to have tusks like the tusks of pigs. And surely I did rage through them, smiting. And they to strike at me a thousand times with great stones, so that mine armour rang, and was all fresh burst, and I near to sicken under the blows and new wounds ; but they not to harm the Maid, for I carried her above their squat and brutish reach.

And the brute-men to seem without end. But I made alway forward unto the glowing of the Circle ; and the night to be full in that place of the fierce shoutings of the Hundred Thousand ; and many—as I did learn—to have tried to come unto me, but that their comrades held them from so useless a dying.

And, in verity, I to be now scarce fifty paces from the glowing of the Circle ; and did be nigh to fall ; for I did be so utter dazed and wounded with the fight, and ill with a vast weariness and the despair and madness of my journey ;

and moreover, as you do know, I not to have slept, but to have carried the Maid forever through days and nights, and to have fought oft.

And lo! the Hundred Thousand stood just within the Circle, and they that were to the front did swing each man the Diskos; and they hurled each the Diskos in among the herd of the tuskt men that did make to slay me. And surely this to save me; for the herd did thin to my front; and I to gather my strength, and to charge with despair, and to smite and never be ceased of smiting; so that there did be dead creatures all about. And behold! I brake through the herd, with Mine Own, and did be upon the Circle. And lo! I stept over the Circle, that did scarce now to give out a Resistance; and a thousand hands did come forward to give me help; yet did none touch me, but gave back from me; for there did be that about me which held them off, as with a little awe; for I to be strange unto them.

And I stood there in a great silence, and the Diskos in my hand ran blood to the haft. And maybe I rockt as I stood; for many again did put out their hands, as to hold me, and again drew back, and were silent.

And I lookt unto them, and they lookt back at me; and I did gasp a while, and was strangely dazed, and did try to tell them that I had need of the Doctors for the Life of Mine Own Maid, that did be dying in mine arms. And behold, in that moment, there did be a sound of giants running, out in the night. And some then to cry out different matters, to aid me, and to beware of the giants, and to bring the Doctors to attend me on the instant.

And other voices did call that the Holy light was gone from above; and likewise the Black Mounds from the outer part of the Circle. And there did be a monstrous noise of roarings in the Land, and all to come bewildered unto my brain, which did surely fail now with the grim and utter stress which had been mine so long.

And there to be also a constant noise that came from near and from upward; and truly I to know, as in a dream, that it did be made of the shouting of the great Millions,

that did make an eternal and vague roaring-sound upward in the night, that did come down from the upper heights, no more loud than a strange and continual murmuring out of the lofty miles.

And surely, I to find my voice in a little minute, and did ask a near man whether there be any Doctors with the men. And in that moment there came forward a Master of the Diskos, which doth be as a Commander of this age. And he made the Salute of Honour with the Diskos, and would have eased the Maid from me; but I to ask again, very slow, whether that there was a Doctor a-near. And he on the instant to give an order; and the great thousands to begin to shape, and did make a mighty lane unto the Great Gateway of the Mighty Pyramid.

And the Master of the Diskos made a sign to certain that did be near; and they stood about me, as I to know dully, lest I fall; but they not to touch me; for I did be as that I must not be laid hand upon; for I did near to choke with despair lest I to have come Home too late; and surely, also, the men to seem as that I did be strange unto them.

And there went orders swift and constant this way and that; and lo! in a little while, there came two big men of the Upward Cities, running; and they had a little man between them upon a sling. And the little man did be a Master of the Doctors; and he aided me gentle to lay Mine Own Maid upon the earth. And the Master of the Diskos made a sign, and the men that did be near, turned each his back; and the Doctor to make an examination for the life of Mine Own.

And there to come about that time a seeming of silence in the land. And truly the Hundred Thousand did be utter quiet; and a great quiet in the Mighty Pyramid; for, in truth, all to know, by this, that there to be a fear that the Maid I did bring out of the night, did be slain by the Evil Forces.

And sudden the little man that did be the Master Doctor, lookt up quiet and piteous at me; so that I knew in a moment that Mine Own Maid did be dead. And he to see that I knew; and he covered the face of Mine Own,

and stood up very speedy ; and he called softly to the men that did be to my back, and he signed to them that some to support me, and some to lift Mine Own Maid, and bear her unto the Great Gateway. And he lookt keen at me ; and I to fight a little that I breathe ; and afterward did make with my hands, that the men not to come near me, neither to touch Mine Own. And the Master Doctor to understand that I did be truly strong until I die, and did beckon the men from me, and from the Maid.

And I stoopt, in a little, and I lifted Mine Own Maid into mine arms for that last journeying.

And I came down the mighty lane of the Hundred Thousand, all in their grey armour. And they did make silent salute with the Diskos reversed, each man as I passed him, and did be utter silent. And I scarce to wot of aught, save that all the world did be quiet and emptied, and my task to have failed, and Mine Own to lie dead in mine arms. Yet, truly, did it to have failed utter ? for I had surely saved Mine Own from the terror of the Second Night Land, and she not to have come alone and with madness unto her death ; but to have died in mine arms ; and she surely to have been comforted within her spirit, because that my love did be so utter about her.

And I to think vaguely and terribly on an hundred sweet love actions that she to have shown unto me ; and sudden I did remember with a dreadful pain how that I never to have waked to discover Mine Own Maid kissing me in my sleep, as I to have meant. And a madness of anguish did flash sudden through the numbness upon my brain ; so that I did be blinded a little, and surely went crooked in my walk ; for I to know, sudden, that the Master Doctor steadied mine elbow for a moment ; but afterward did leave me be, as I to have again control of my spirit.

And lo ! as I drew nigh unto the Great Gateway, the lights of the Pyramid to begin to glow again more strong, and the machinery of the Lifts and the Air Pumps to work, because that now the Earth-Current did grow once more to natural strength. And they to have power now to open the Great Gate, which did be done by great machines.

And there to come forth to meet me a number of the

Masters of the Mighty Pyramid; and the dear Master Monstruwacan did come before them all, so eager as that he did be mine own Father. And he to have heard somewhat, vaguely, that there to have been a fear for the life of the maid that I did bring.

And surely, he did be told by one near to the Gateway, that the Maid did be dead in mine arms; for he and all the Masters did pause and stand silent for me to go by, and did reverse each his Diskos; and this to have been an Honour shown, than which there did be scarce any greater.

And there went a constant murmuring up in the night, which did be the speech of the Millions, questioning. And the news that the Maid did be dead, went upward through the miles. And my spirit to know, as in a dream, of the spiritual noise which did go outward through all space, and did be the grief of the Multitudes, as they did hear this thing. Yet, truly, there did nothing comfort me anywise; neither I proper yet to know the verity of my loss; for I did go stunned.

And I came in through the Great Gateway, and the Full Watch did stand there silent in their armour; and they made the Salute of Honour. And I went onward with the dead Maid that I did bring out of Eternity.

And presently, they that were around, did guide me, with the Maid in mine arms, unto the Great Lift. And I took Mine Own Maid into the Great Lift; and the Masters came with me, and did be in their armour; and none did speak to me. And the Master Monstruwacan and the Master of the Doctors stood silent to the side of me. And there did be everywhere great Multitudes, that I did see vaguely; but my spirit not to wot of them.

And lo! I stood very quiet and dumb as we did go upward through the miles; and the Millions of the Cities stood about the Great Lift, and there did be a great silence upward and downward through the strange miles; save for the weeping of women in dear sympathy, that did sound far and low and constant.

And presently I to know that the Master Monstruwacan and the Master of the Doctors did look one to the other; and I to be aware sudden that I stood in my blood; for I

did be wounded in a hundred parts, and the blood to go away from me. Yet did the Master Doctor be slow to do aught for me, because that he to perceive that I did be slain in the heart ; and there to be no pain so dreadful as that he should be like to wake me unto, if that he went hastily.

Yet, presently, there did come whirlings into my head ; and someone did surely make to ease Mine Own Maid from my arms. But I held her, dumbly ; and the blood to go the more from me ; and they not to know what should be done. And I to look at them. And the dear Master Monstruwacan did be saying somewhat unto me, that I did have no power to hear ; but only to know that his face did be very human. And there went a strange noise all about me ; and the Master Monstruwacan to seem to hold me up, and to beckon to some that did be to my back. And lo ! there came a blackness, and the gentleness of arms about mine armour . . . . . .

And I to come presently to quietness and to half-dreams ; and did alway to seem that I carried Mine Own Maid in mine arms. But truly there did pass three great days, whilst that I did be thus. And I all that while to be laid quiet, and to be tended by the Master Doctor, and aided by all knowledge that did be known of Humans.

And on the third day, as it might be called, I to come full unto my senses ; and the pain to take me in the breast ; and the Master of the Doctors did be with me, and they that nurst me ; and the Master Doctor watched me very keen and gentle.

And I did be in a bed of the Health Room of mine own city. And I gat from the bed, and the Doctor to say naught ; but only to watch me. And I walkt to and fro a little, and he alway to watch me. And presently he gave me somewhat to drink ; and I drank. And I was gone soon from all knowledge.

And I to come again unto a knowing that I yet to live ; and there went a certain strength in my body. And lo ! the first that I did see, was the Master of the Doctors ; and I to perceive in a moment that he had wakened me, and had nurst my strength for that moment, that I live through

the Burial. For he to be very wise, and to have known from that first seeing of me, that I not to live after that Mine Own did die.

And there was brought to me a loose garment ; but I to refuse the garment, dumbly, and did look about me very troubled and forgetting. And the Master Doctor lookt alway at me ; and lo ! in a moment he called one,and gave an order. And there was brought in then my broken armour, and a garment to wear below. And I then to know that I did be content in this matter ; and the Doctor alway to watch me. And they drest me in my broken armour.

And surely, as they drest me, my spirit to hear the sorrow and sympathy of the Multitudes, and did know that they went downward by millions, unto the Country of Silence.

And lo ! in that moment when I near to be in mine armour, I to mind sudden again that I never to have waked to discover Mine Own Maid kissing me in my sleep. And the Pain gat me in the breast, so that I had surely ended then, but that the Master Doctor set somewhat to my breath, that eased me, and gave something of dullness unto my senses for a while.

And I did be carried then in a sling unto the Great Lift, and there did be a bed in the lift, and the Doctor to have me to lie upon the bed ; and I to know that he also to know that I never to need a bed any more ; neither should I ever to come upward again in the Lift.

And truly the Mighty Pyramid did be an emptyness ; for there did seem to be left only the Stress Masters that did arrange the moving of the Millions. And the Stress Masters did stand about the Lift, as we dropt downward through the great miles unto the Underground Fields. And we came downward in the last unto the Country of Silence, which did lie an hundred miles deep in the world, and did be an hundred miles every way of Silence unto the Dead.

And they that were with me, gat me from the Lift, and did mean to carry me in the sling unto the Last Road. But I stood upon my feet, and made that I should walk, and I held out my hand for the Diskos, which one did

carry. And the Master Doctor signed that they should obey me, as my spirit to know. And I walkt very steadfast down the Way that did lead unto The Last Road ; and the Master Doctor walkt behind me, a little space off.

And surely, there did be all the Peoples of the World in that great Country ; and the Peoples did be spread out forever, so far as my seeing did go ; and they to have sight of me ; and all the æther did be stirred with the humanness of their sorrow and their kind sympathy. And there grew a murmur, which did be like to a low rolling thunder, and did be the voices of the Peoples. And the rolling of that great husht Sound went to and fro across that mighty Country of Quiet ; and there to be afterward an utter silence.

And I saw below me the place of the Last Rest, where did be the beginning of the Last Road ; and there did lie there a little figure, covered with a white robe, that did glimmer with the beauteous work of women that had sticht love and honour into that Last Garment. And surely, I to rock upon my feet, and to steady myself with the Diskos ; and the Master Doctor to be unto my side in a moment, and gave me again something that I breathe-in. But, indeed, I to refuse, after that I had taken one breath of the drug ; for I to be able to bear my pain the little time that I now to have to live ; and I to mean that I have no dimness of my senses for those short minutes that I should have yet near unto Mine Own. And truly the Master Doctor did not press me anywise, but had a perfect understanding, and went quiet again to the rearward.

And I came soon to that place where Mine Own Dead One did lie ; and the Master Monstruwacan stood to her feet, and did be clothed in grey armour, and had the Diskos reversed ; and this to be for an Honour unto My Dead Maid.

And there kneeled two maids in white, one to the right and one to the left of Mine Own, and they to be for Faithfulness, and did be maids, because that they watched by a maid ; and had likewise been matrons, if that the Dead had been wife unto any.

And the place at the Head of the Last Rest did be empty, and did be for me ; and he that stood to the head, did be for Love ; for it did be the chief, and did hold

dominion over and did make to live both Faithfulness and Honour. And this to be the way of the Burial alway.

And lo ! I took my courage into my heart ; and I stood to the head of Mine Own Maid ; and I lookt down upon the wondrous white glory of the garment, which did be white because that Mine Own did be a Maid ; yet did be worked with yellow Flowers of Weeping, as we did call them, because that she had died in love. And I to know that no hand had toucht that wonderful garment, save the hands of maidens.

And behold ! as I stood there, from far away over the Land, there did come a far and faint sound ; and the sound did come more nigh, so that I knew that far off, beyond the Hills of the Babes, the Millions did begin to sing the Calling Song, where Million did call husht unto Million, and the sound did come onward toward where we did be, and did go over us, and pass onward in a husht and wondrous breathing of sound, as that all the Love that did be ever in this world, did call in a low anguish unto a lost Beloved. And the sound to pass away and away over that mighty Country in the deep Earth, and did hush and hush unto a great and utter silence, save for a faint murmur of countless women weeping, that did be in the air of that Land of Quiet.

And there to be a space of silence, and again the silence to be broken by a far sound ; and there to come again from beyond the far Hills of the Babes a strange and low sound, and did be as of a wind wandering through damp forests. And the sound grew, and came across the Hills of the Babes, and did be breathed forth by Million after Million, so that in a little I to hear the Song of Weeping sung very low and sorrowful by the multitudes. And the Song came onward over all that great Country, and past over us, and went onward into the far Land beyond the Dome and did be caught by the voices of Millions that did be hid in great distances, and so to go onward forever, and to die at last unto a mighty silence.

And the Master Monstruwacan lookt at me from the feet of Mine Own Maid, and I to know that the moment did be come when I to part from the Maid Naani forever

and forever, even though I to live in some strange future, and to find her soul in some other sweet child. And I stoopt and laid the Diskos beside Mine Own Maid there upon the Last Rest ; and the two maids drew back the light wonder of the Garment, and showed me the face of Mine Own, and she to sleep there forever so sweet and husht as a child, and as oft I to have seen her to sleep. And I lookt a little while, and the pain of my heart did be sufficient so that I knew I died as I lookt. And once more I lookt, and I set my soul about Mine Own. And I fought with myself, and stood upward, and the maids did cover the face of Mine Own Maid.

And the Master Monstruwacan commended Naani unto Eternity. And he raised the Diskos reversed ; and lo ! the Road did begin to move upward unto the Dome, and Mine Own Maid did be upon the Road ; and I to fight that I keep breathing ; so that I not to die before she be lost utter to my sight.

And there did rise now a sound from all that Country that had no order in it ; and did be like to a low moaning that did fill all the air of the Land ; and there to be also a constant sound, as of a little whistling dree wind that did be in all that Country of Quiet ; and truly this to be more than any singing ; for it to be the true weeping of multitudes, that did sorrow from the heart, with the grief of this thing that did be.

And I stood utter still, and did draw my breath very even, and lookt unto that small form that did be now afar off where it did lie upon the moving Roadway. And I gazed, as that my soul and all my being did have no power else, even as a man that dies, doth set all his strength to a last movement. And I not to wot that the Master Monstruwacan and the two maids did hold me up, because they to perceive that I did be dying ; for I only to see Mine Own Little One lying afar off upon the moving of the Last Road.

And the Maid in that moment to come to the place where the road did pass into the strange and luminous vapour of the Earth-Current, which did lie all about the base of the Dome ; and the vapour to be only as a faint shining smoke, scarce seen, yet to be enough to give

something of uncertainty to the Dead, when that they did have past inward of it.

And I stared, with all that did be left of my strength ; for Mine Own to be gone utter and forever in but a little minute. And the uncertainty of the luminous vapour did cling about her, and to make her to seem unreal to my gaze ; for the vapour did be in constant movement, and to give a seeming of shifting to and fro of all that did be in it.

And behold ! as I did stare, with my dreadful pain, there did be sudden a strange hoarse noise from the nearer Millions. And lo ! in an instant there came a mighty Shout out of all that Country ; and the shout did be made again, and did grow into a mighty hoarse roaring from the Millions, so that all that great Country did be filled with the monstrous sound. And, in verity, I to have seen the thing, likewise ; but to have set it to the madness of longing of my heart and to that desperate and dreadful pain which did make me to be crazed and lost from all sane thinking.

And the thing that I did see, had been that the Maid did seem to move, there upon the Last Road, where she did lie ; but indeed, this to have appeared only to be the stirring of the luminous vapour of the Earth-Current, which did seem to make things shift, as I have told.

And lo ! I now to see truly that the Maid did move where she was laid afar off upon the Road ; and I now to know, and to believe that she did indeed live. And my life came into me with a bounding ; yet did my heart seem to be a moment stilled in my breast. And the Master Monstruwacan to have signed already that the Roadway be stopt, and brought backward ; but I to be now upon the last Road, and did run as a madman, shouting vainly upon the name of Mine Own. And I to learn afterward that there to have been a dreadful peril that all the near Millions to rush toward the Last Road, and so, mayhap, to have caused the death of many, and to have been like to have crusht Mine Own. But this danger to have been eased, because that the Watch Master did act very prompt, and set the great regiments of his men to keep back the Millions and did send a signal abroad over all the Country, that

there to be calmness, for that the Maid should be succoured. And alway, whilst this to be, I did run staggering most strangely upward of the Last Road ; and surely that great roof did ring and boom with the constant and mighty shoutings of the Millions.

And there did run others also along the Road to my back ; but I to have been the first, and to make a good speed, though I did stagger and rock so strange upon my feet : and the Road alway to be moving backward under me ; and so I to be come wonderful soon unto where the Maid did be. And she to be upon her back, and to have pusht the Garment from her face, and did be lying with her eyes open, and a look of gentle wonderment upon her dear face. And she then to see me, and her eyes did smile at me, very glad and quiet ; for there to be yet an utter weakness upon her.

And lo ! I came with a falling beside her, and I gat upon my knees and upon my hands, and my heart did shake my lips to dry whisperings. And she to look weak and steadfast unto me, and I to look forever at her ; and I did alway try to say things unto her ; but my mouth to refuse me.

And understanding did come into her, as a light ; and she to know in that instant that she to be truly come into the Mighty Pyramid, and I to have gat her there somewise ; and she to wake sudden in her body, and set her hands forth all a-trembling from the Garment, and in dreadful trouble. And I to see then that the blood did go from me, constant ; and the Maid to have perceived this thing, so that she was waked the more proper in a moment from her death-swoon.

And surely, I did bleed very dreadful ; for all my wounds did be opened with my running. And I to have sudden power with my lips, and did say unto her, very simple, that I loved her. And she to be all in an haze from me ; and I to know that she to have come likewise unto her knees, and did have my head upon her breast ; and there to be an utter shaking of the air with some great sound, and a mighty spiritual stirring of the æther of the world.

And there to be then the voice of the Master Monstru-

wacan very dull in mine ears ; and the low voice of the Master Doctor ; but I never to hear what they did be saying ; and did know only that Mine Own Maid did live ; and I not to mean to die, but to fight unto living. And even whilst that I made this resolving, I was gone into an utter blackness.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LOVE DAYS

Now, when that I gat back unto life, I to know that I went upward in the Lift, and did be upon that same bed, where I to think I never to need a bed any more, neither to come upward again from out of the Country of Silence.

And I to know vague and strange, that there rose up from out of the mighty depths of the world, the deep thunder of the Underground Organs, and did sound as that they made a strange and utter distant music beyond death ; and there to go alway a rolling chaunting, as that multitudes did sing beyond far mountains, and the sound to be somewhiles as a far-blowing wind, low in the Deep ; and again to come clear, and to be that great olden melody of the Song of Honour. And I knew, as in a dream, that the Millions in that deep Country made an Honour and a Rejoicing over this Wonder of Joy which did be come. But yet all to be faint and half hid from me, and mine eyes to be as that they had no power to open, and I to seem to be lifting alway upon strange waters of unrealness. And there to be sweet and lovely odours, and these to be of reality, and to come from the great Fields, where the flowers did alway to grow about the passage ways of the Lifts ; for the Lift even then to be going upward through the great miles.

And mayhap I moved a little ; for there came the voice of the Master Doctor low and gentle to me ; and bid me

rest ; for that all did be well with the Maid. And surely, afterward, I did be gone into an haze, and there to be then a seeming of days in which I half to live and half to sleep, and to wonder without trouble whether I did be dead.

And then there to come days when I lay very quiet, and had no thought of aught ; and the Master Doctor oft to bend over me in this hour and that hour, and to look keen into my face. And in the end, after strange spaces, there bent over me another, and there lookt down upon me the dear and lovely face of Mine Own, and the eyes did speak love into my soul ; yet did she be calm and husht. And I to begin again to live in my body, and I made, mayhap, a little fumbling with my hands ; for she to take and to hold them ; and life to come from her to me ; and she to be ever wordless and gentle ; and contentment to grow in me, and presently a natural slumber.

And there came a day when I did be let rise, and they that tended me, carried me to one of the Quiet Gardens of the Pyramid ; and they set me there, and did seem to leave me alone. And there came One then around a bush, and lookt at me a moment, as with an half shyness ; only that the love that did shine in her eyes, made the shyness to be a little thing. And, truly, I knew that it did be Mine Own Maid ; but I never before to have seen Naani drest pretty as a maid. And I lookt to her, and knew that she did be more dainty than even I to have known. And sudden I made that I rise to come unto her ; but she to run quick to me, that she stop me of this natural foolishness; and she then to sit beside me, and to take my head against her breast, and she not to deny me her lips ; but to be both a maid and a mother to me in the same moment.

And afterward, she had me to be very still ; and we to sit there in an utter dumb happiness, until they that did attend me, were come again. And the Master of the Doctors did be with them, and I to see that there went something of satisfaction in his face.

And after that day I saw Mine Own Maid every day ; and I gat better unto health with a wondrous quickness ; for Love did mend me. And soon I did be let go downward unto the Fields ; but yet to go by private ways, because that the Multitudes should be like to follow me alway ; and I to need to be quiet.

And the Maid to be with me; for the Master Monstruwacan and the Master of the Doctors did agree upon this matter, and had an Officer of Marriage to wed us; and we to be married very quiet and simple; for I yet to be overweak for the Public Marriage, which we to have later; when, truly, the Millions made us a Guard of Honour eight miles high, from the top unto the bottom of the Mighty Pyramid. But this to have been later, as I do tell, and did be a Ceremonial of the Peoples, because that they not to be denied that they gave me an Honour.

And surely the Maid to be with me alway, and did be now my wife, and my strength to come alway upon me, and Mine Own to grow again unto a perfect health. And, in verity, we did be now in the Love Days which do be the most beauteous, if that the Love to be True.

And we did wander through the mighty Fields at our will, and walkt in the Love Paths of the Fields, which did be alway anear to those places where did be the villages. And I to hide our name, lest we to be beset by any, out of natural curiousness and kindliness; for we to need to be utter together and quiet.

And we to chose those places for our slumber where beauty of flowers did be most wondrous; and we to carry somewhat of food with us; but also to eat when we came unto the villages which did be here and there in the Fields, which were truly so huge as Countries. And Mine Own did make good her promise an hundred times, as you shall say, and did prepare me a great and hearty meal; and did tease me utter that I did be a glutton, as I did eat, and kist me, lest that I have ever a chance to say aught in mine own defence. And truly, she did be all that my heart and my spirit did desire; and she to have companioned me with Love, and to have entered my spirit into Joy.

And once we to go downward unto the Country of Silence; but not to stay very long at that time; because that my Memory did return upon me. Yet in the after time, we to wander there oft with Memory, and Holiness of great Thinkings, and with Love which does hold all.

And as we to leave that Country, I to tell Mine Own how that when she had been suspend of her life by the Horrid Force of the House, I to have minded me with a

dreadful pain that I never to have waked to discover her kissing me when that I did sleep. And surely Mine Own Dear One did blush most lovely, and had never known that I did be aware of her sweet naughtiness ; and she then to have all thought for mine agony, when that she did be dead, ere the Vapour of life of the Earth-Force did set her spirit free of the Silence.

And she to come unto me in dear understanding.

And she then to tell me that the Doctors to say that she had been, as it were, stunned and froze of the spirit, and all her Being and Life suspend ; and the great life-force of the Earth-Current to have waked her spirit, and her body then to live and her blood to flow proper again. And the Doctors had talkt much and searched much of late in the olden Records of their Work ; and they to have found somewhat of one such happening in the olden time ; but, truly, naught such to have been ever through a mighty age of years.

And whilst that we to wander and to rest in the Fields, I oft to tell Mine Own of this matter and that matter ; and I to know that she had learned somewhat of odd things, ere I did be come to health ; but not overmuch ; for she also to have been utter alack, as you shall think ; and to have come from her bed, when that I did lie so still ; for the Master Doctor to have ordained this, because he to fear that I to be going truly to die, if that he did not do somewhat to awaken my spirit. And in verity, you shall think upon the deepness of my Love as I to know that she did have held my hands so brave and gentle, whilst that she to have scarce power to her feet. And I to say a little holy praise of Mine Own.

And so do I come to mine ending ; and have but one more thing that I tell. And this to happen a while later ; after that Mine Own and I had gone through the second marriage which did be the Public Marriage. For it did be, that one day My Wife, that did be Mine Own, did take me with a sweet cunning unto the Hall of Honour. And surely, when I was come there, I to see that many of the Peoples did be in that great Hall, and did stand about in a silence ; yet as that they had no meaning to do aught ; but yet to be that they did wait upon somewhat.

And My Wife did go forward with me unto the centre

place of the Hall; and sudden I saw why that she did bring me so cunning sweet; for there did stand in the midst of the Hall of Honour, in the Place of Honour, a Statue of a man in broken armour, that did carry a maid forever.

And I did be dumb; and how of this Age shall you to know the Honour that this to mean in that; for it did be an Honour that was given only to the great Dead; and I to be but a young man, and did be so utter far off from greatness; save that I to love with all my heart and with all my spirit, and therefore death to be but a little thing before love. And you to know how Love doth make sweet and brave the heart; and to have understanding with me in my humbleness and my wonder and my natural pride that there did any so think to honour me.

And Mine Own did be weeping with joy and honest pride of her man, beside me. And there to be an utter silence of dear sympathy in all the great Hall of Honour. And they that did be there, to let me go in quietness, with Mine Own, which did be a lovely thing of understanding.

And I to go loving and thoughtful with Mine Own Wife; and she to be very nigh to me.

And I to have gained Honour; yet to have learned that Honour doth be but as the ash of Life, if that you not to have Love. And I to have Love. And to have Love is to have all; for that which doth be *truly* LOVE doth mother Honour and Faithfulness; and they three to build the House of Joy.

THE END.